

THROUGH THE STORM

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PICTURES OF LIFE IN ARMENIA

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LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET

1899

**TO MY
COUNTRYMEN**

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE case of Armenia obviously claims attention, and it is for the purpose of forwarding this claim to the attention of the Western European and American public that the author of this book has written. He has a right to speak, for he is familiar with the facts of the matter, and has an almost unique knowledge of the causes, progress, and aims of the late revolt of a large section of his countrymen against the Turkish Government. Whether the solutions he proposes for the Eastern question, as far as it touches Armenia, are correct or not, does not affect the value of his book, which is intended to give pictures of life in Armenia during the darkest part of her long and troubled history. He writes frankly from the Armenian point of view, but his stories are none the less firmly based upon fact. He has known personally most of the characters he draws ; the opinions they express are those they actually held ; the adventures they go through are real experiences of his friends and kin-folk. He has deliberately chosen the form of his book, a series of incidents and aspects of Armenia in time of terror, connected together as it were by the black and red threads of persecution and revolt which run through the whole book. It was impossible for him at present, for obvious reasons, to write down the

plain story with particulars—the story is not yet finished, many of the characters are still in danger. The form he has chosen seemed, therefore, to him, the best mode of expression at his command. It has allowed him to express himself freely without compromising any friend or publishing any matter better unpublished. It has enabled him to deal with his facts from different sides, and given him, as he believes, a wider range of facts to present before his readers.

The book was written in French on the basis of a rough draft in Armenian; from the French it was translated by Mrs Elton. An attempt has been made throughout the English version to keep rather to the sense of the text than to try and reproduce the actual French idioms in English, and this was done according to the wish of the author, who has twice been over the whole translation, and satisfied himself that it represents his meaning as exactly as may be.

Mr Nazarbek is anxious that his readers should judge for themselves whether, given the facts—the mere facts of misgovernment tempered by massacre—there is not sufficient ground for some interference of the Western powers on behalf of his persecuted people. What are the facts in the simplest form? They appear to be these—There are in Asia Minor, bordering upon the frontiers of Russia, Turkey, Persia, and Syria, some millions of an ancient historic people, speaking an Aryan tongue, belonging to a venerable form of the Christian belief. This people has had a noble history and a high civilisation in the past; its members have shown themselves eminent alike in peace and war, persistent in the struggle for life, steadfast beyond the average in their aims, practical,

conservative in their lives, with a remarkably intense family life, and a complete grasp of the economic principles that make for success in the commercial world—a people in some of their modern aspects resembling their Parsee cousins, and in others recalling the heroic persistency of their more distant Swiss relations. This people, for the more part, dwells under the Turkish rule, which has been and is still of the ordinary Moslem type, tolerable only to those who are of Islam, and often oppressive even to them, but regularly and irregularly oppressive to its Christian subjects. The Armenian being found useful to the government, was often able formerly to purchase exemption from the worst exactions and illegalities of the government's officials ; his importance as a banker and trader made him a resource not to be neglected, but which it was wiser to treat with tolerance. But as Asiatic Turkey, owing to a variety of causes, ceased to prosper, while its misgovernment increased and checked the possibility of recovery, the Armenian, tired of unavailing submission and becoming penetrated with the "Western spirit of revolt," began to resist outrage, and even to avenge it. The Turk, long unthwarted, proud of what he considered his truer faith, and of what he knew to be his superior power, grew furious when it was forced upon him that the "faithful nation" had its own hopes and ideals, and that those were not based upon the acceptance of the eternal supremacy of the Ottoman ; that Armenia, in fact, was bent upon securing at least as good treatment as Samos, and would hardly be content in the end with less local independence than Bulgaria. Regardless of the folly of crushing a nationality which

might, if encouraged, form the best and surest ultimate bulwark to the Russian advance, the Porte met the revolt with those horrible methods of suppression that have always formed part of Oriental practical politics, but which in our days cannot fail to startle and shock civilised powers, even when their own immediate interests, as they understand them, forbid more than verbal remonstrance. England, hampered by many and serious cares, and unable to reach that part of Armenia which was the scene of the chief Turkish barbarities, found herself reduced to the exhibition of strong rebuke, which hardly did more, as it seemed, than irritate the Porte. France was hoodwinked, and her people duped as to the facts by her complaisance towards her Slavonic ally. Germany had no means of enforcing her advice, and consequently did not tender it. The United States were not armed. Russia might have interfered with instant success, but her statesmen cynically avowed their acquiescence in a process which could only tend to the removal of an obstacle in the way of their advance south-west when the time came; for, obviously, a strong Armenian nationality, with an older civilisation than that of Russia, could resist Russification, and the ancient Armenian church would yield hardly to the measures by which the Orthodox Synod "compels" those not of its peculiar communion to "come in." The Armenians were left to their fate, thousands perished, thousands did their best to avenge their brethren, thousands managed to hold out, as the men of Zeitun did, and somehow, though contrary to all probability, to weather the storm at its fiercest, and secure some slight measure of temporary amelioration, at what a cost of

blood and tears may be easily understood, when one recollects how many gallant lives it cost merely to secure that news of the fortunes of Zeitun should reach the wide world west of the Armenian highlands. The men of Zeitun are surely as worthy of respect as the men of Montenegro, whether we think them wise to have taken up arms, or foolish not to have agreed with a notoriously brutal adversary quickly.

Surely it is to the interest of Western Europe, (though not of Russia) that an Eastern Switzerland should be allowed to grow up on the east of Asia Minor, a power that ought to be suffered to have its own internal development, to show the energy that is in it, and allow the possibilities that seem to the best observers latent in the Armenian character the scope they are believed to need. A national intellect and character, so strong in their past developments, so persistent in spite of all obstacles, must not be lost to the world.

It is perfectly useless for England or any other state to threaten the Porte, until such time as she is able to carry out her threats promptly and decisively. When that moment arrives, the Porte will, as in the past, give way gracefully.

Germany might probably, as matters now stand, interfere diplomatically with considerable success. If she has convinced herself that it will profit her to secure the goodwill of the Armenians, she will not fail to do so. Moltke's words as to the suitability of Asia Minor as a sphere of German interest, are certainly not yet forgotten.

Those who profess to hate the Turk because he

is a Turk, will find little encouragement in this book. The Turk, too, suffers under bad government: the difference between him and the Armenian is, that in the case of the Turk the government is his own, not that of aliens. The Turkish government is bad, because of an evil condition and practice, because of the obstacles, ignorance, bigotry, corruption, the hatred to change however beneficial, obstacles not unknown in the West, but flourishing in less civilised states, where cruelty is not yet normally discouraged, and ignorance still abnormally fostered, when corruption is the only step to advancement, and bigotry the condition of office. The Turk is, perhaps, no worse governed than the Persian or the Chinese, but the Armenian suffers more than any of these. There is no necessity that he should suffer, and it seems, to say the least, the general interest of mankind that he should not suffer.

Nor is it right to attribute the bad government from which the Armenian suffers to Islam. Jewish and Buddhist governments have been quite as cruel; Confucian, or even Christian principles, do not necessarily imply justice, mercy, or truth in them that practise them. Spain, in the West Indies, employed methods which vie with those of the Ottoman, when, she was most catholic; neither "monkery" nor the "holy office," have ever flourished under Islam. It is because the Turk is half civilised that his government is so bad; he does not feel the necessity yet for "ending or mending" the institutions he endures; he has a loyalty such as that of the Frenchman of the seventeenth century felt for his sovereign; he is as callous as a Spartan to the way his helots are treated. He

can often be roused to the foulest, cruellest, outrages by the passion of bigotry and the incitement of plunder. The natural excellencies, however great, of a semi-civilised people do not fit them to rule over a more cultured race. Such a state of things is generally felt to be intolerable, when the subject race is proud, capable, and progressive, and only needs numbers and combination to make good its claims to self-rule and an unfettered national career.

The wisdom of Europe, after no slight delay, has put the Cretans in the way of working out their own salvation, if they are capable of so doing. What those who know the Armenians best desire, is that they may be given the same chance. Precisely how this may be done is a question on which few know enough to speak with authority.

Meanwhile, it is a service to his own people and it would appear, to Europe generally, that Mr Nazarbek has done in expressing the wishes and aspirations of a considerable section of his nation, and in showing the conditions of Armenian life under the stress of the struggle between the government and the advanced Armenian party.

Mr Nazarbek has not desired me to write as an advocate, nor, indeed, should I have wished to do so. He is rightly content to let his book speak for itself. I have simply tried to put down the case as I have been able to understand it. I am only anxious that those who will interest themselves in this question should be induced to look honestly into the matter for themselves without sentiment or prejudice. It is because I think this book may, by its intrinsic interest, induce people to do this, that, in spite of my belief

that *good wine needs no bush*, and that few general readers ever even skim a preface, I have done as Mr Nazarbek asked me, and penned so much by way of prefix to his work. He is not responsible in any degree for my opinions or the way in which they are expressed. It has, at all events, been a pleasure to me to vouch to his wide knowledge of things Armenian ; to the labour he has given to this national question which has indeed occupied him, day and night, for years , to his absolute devotion to what he believes to be the highest and best aims of his own people

F YORK POWELL

OXFORD, 1899

INTRODUCTION

THE question of Armenia, not long since a burning one, has been in abeyance for the last two years. But it is not dead, as some less hopeful spirits would persuade us. It is not dead, because its causes still exist. It cannot die so long as the yoke of the Sultan remains upon Turkey. It is not dead, because the Armenian people, despite the dreadful calamities that it has suffered, has not lost its vitality. The Armenian people clings to the Armenian soil, and longs more than ever for emancipation, and for a new life that shall give it free scope for developing its capabilities for progress.

The Armenian question, therefore, is still unsolved. The concern that it causes is unabated. Since the historical and unprecedented "horrors," many serious and even tragical events have happened in the civilised world. Though years have gone by, the blood-stained spectre of Armenia still haunts the troubled conscience of Europe. The past of Armenia is still with us, nor can its history become a closed chapter until the future shall have made just atonement to our martyred nation.

Europe owes Armenia a reparation. She has owed it since the Berlin Congress, and her debt has increased during the last three years. Diplomatic

Europe, however, continues to shut her eyes, and her heart, to this obligation. Her one desire is to preserve the integrity of Turkey for the present, in order that the spoil may afterwards be divided at a more convenient season. She would fain forget at what a sanguinary cost the integrity of Turkey is thus preserved. But it must be borne in mind what Turkey really is, considered as a power, and what are the respective characters of the Mohammedan and the Christian peoples within her borders.

In elucidation I may perhaps quote some words of my own that have already appeared in print.

The integrity of a decomposing carcass cannot be maintained even in a phrase. In the second half of this century vigorous efforts have been made, particularly by England, to keep Turkey territorially whole; to keep her in the rank of the Great Powers. To-day every one knows the result. Turkey has shown herself incapable of profiting by these efforts. All projects of reform have come to nothing; the Turkish "Constitution" is a dead letter. How is this? It is not alone because of the ill-will and intrigues of her Government, but because these are backed by the absolute inertia of her people—their open and consistent indifference to all progress, political or economical. These have their roots in the poisonous march of "Turkish life," which is, in truth, absence of life. The Mohammedan feels no need of change; the word "improvement" has no attraction for him. Thus the misgovernment, of which he too is a victim, has become normal, and has come to be regarded by him as a legal condition

and a fatal necessity. It has been shown, whenever any reform has been tried, that it is the Mussulman himself who is the true enemy of progress. He is afraid of the smallest new thing if it comes from the Christian Powers, the Giaours. This is that persistent internal principle of his, of which all Turkish rulers (but specially Abdul Hamid) have known how to avail themselves. On the other hand, the Moslem yields easily to tyranny when his fanaticism is not called into play. There is therefore nothing new in the internal situation; every successive Government has harped upon these old strings, and an Empire so basely maintained is condemned in advance to death. Nothing but the formation among the Mohammedans of a great and resolute political party, with progress and reform for their object, could have saved the Turks. But such a party has never yet appeared, and the hour for its profitable intervention is long past.

Now, let us imagine whole populations, like the Greeks, Armenians, and others, who desire progress, political, economical, and social, who are capable of intellectual and moral development, who have a much higher culture than the Turks, finding themselves under Turkish Government, oppressed, outraged, spoiled, massacred, crushed by the brutality of their conquerors. These people need (it is for them a historical necessity) protection for their lives and their honour; they need progress, moral and material—that is, they need and desire a general renovation of all the conditions and forms of their public life. Herein lies the acute contradiction—the flagrant divergence of interests and of historical

tendencies—between the Mohammedans on one side, and the Christians on the other. And the Christians are under the yoke of the Mohammedans. This is this inversion of things, this shock to nature which has kept the Eastern Question open all this century; and so long as this state of things lasts, and an atmosphere which is deadly to the germs of development among the Christian peoples of the East is artificially preserved, so long will the dangerous Eastern Question remain open. If no solution be found, prompt and effectual, on behalf of the Christian subjects of Turkey, the Eastern Question must hang like some dread meteor in the air, a continual portent menacing terrible European catastrophes. It is the existing facts of Turkish rule which, after brief delay, must bring the Ottoman Empire to the ground: the Turk will be constrained to leave Europe, and to quit countries which have never rightly belonged to him, but which he has for centuries been allowed to ruin and devastate. Henceforward Turkey can only be considered as a dead body, which must be removed.

Ottoman Governments of all times (and particularly that of Abdul Hamid himself) have always understood clearly enough the contradictory tendencies based on history, the radical differences of social structure, that separate the two elements—Christian and Mussulman—in Turkey. They have understood that, given Christian development, the continuance of their dominion and of Mussulman rule must become impossible. They have understood that skill in industry, in trade, in agriculture—nay, that

this very intellectual and moral powers and capacities of the Christian peoples under their yoke place an abyss between the Christian and the Turk, who, not possessing these capacities, is not a producer. Under existing conditions the governing Turk leads a parasitic life, is a mere consumer of Christian produce, simply profiting, whether under political or social forms, by his privileged situation as conqueror and ruler. As long as the Christian peoples led a resigned life, as long as they showed no clear appreciation of their situation, as long as they submitted with docility to the vexation, the despotism, and devastation of the Turks, the exercise of this parasitic life was easy and pleasant for the Ottoman Government, as well as for the Turkish officials and people. The Turkish people, being poor and non-productive, have come to find in this parasitic state an absolute condition of their existence. Moreover, the existence of this parasitic state has become a powerful political instrument for narrowly restricting the possibilities of material development among the subject Christian peoples. The Kurds, and other savage hordes that inhabit the Ottoman Empire, have always furnished successive Ottoman Governments with useful tools for these ends. It has not been merely in order to satisfy their taste for brigandage, and to prevent their becoming a discontented element in the State, that the Ottoman Government has formed the habit of allowing these wild tribes to keep up continual depredations on their Christian neighbours. It goes further, and encourages them in their work of destruction of Christian property ; gives the order itself for definite

acts of brigandage, and is always ready to furnish its instruments with every kind of protection and help against interference from any quarter. But as soon as the consciousness of their miserable condition began to be awakened among the Christian peoples, protests began to flow in upon the Ottoman Government. And that Government, in place of making amends, immediately inaugurated the era of persecutions that have always culminated in massacre. The Christians would become a danger if their just and lawful claims were not satisfied, so the Ottoman Government has always made it part of its policy to exterminate those among the Christian peoples who showed the greatest sense of their position, and the greatest capacity for revolt. It is in this way that hideous persecutions and massacres have become a definite traditional policy, to which the Sultans have had recourse every time they wished to crush one of the Christian peoples living under their Government. It is thus that at the beginning of this century more than a quarter of a million of Greeks were massacred in Attica, Morea, and the Archipelago. It is in this way that the Bulgarian, Armenian, Cretan, and other massacres have taken place. These massacres, in fact, form part of a regular system of government, which has in our day become a clearly marked political force, strikingly regular and singularly, even feverishly, active.

Such is the political environment of the Armenians in Turkey; yet this ancient people, surrounded by savage bands of Kurds, and by the Mohammedan barbarians of Asia Minor, is cultured and progressive.

Is it not natural that its first—nay, its one consideration—should be its future as a people, a future persistently obscured and endangered in the midst of these Mohammedan surroundings?

The Armenian sense of *nationality* is reflected in the present work, which I have the honour to offer to the indulgence of the English public. It consists of a series of pictures, incidents drawn from the actual life of the Armenian people, many of them relating to the revolutionary Armenian movement that the last ten years have developed. These pictures, though varied, are linked together, like beads forming an unbroken whole.

The personages are real, chosen from among the most characteristic of those who have taken part in the national movement, who have left their ineffaceable mark upon it, and have become for ever memorable to their countrymen. I have almost in every case used the real names of those who have died valiantly for the national cause. On the other hand, the names of the living are suppressed and their identity concealed; and, indeed, as they still live under a despotic *régime*, my scruples on this head will be easily comprehended.

It seems incumbent upon me in this place to give some brief information concerning the Revolutionary Armenian Party, to which so many of my characters belong. It is called the *Huntchak* party, and has endeavoured to formulate, in its political and social programme, the aspirations of the Armenian people. It has principally (and, for years, almost exclusively) directed and given practical activity to the national Armenian movement.

The adversaries of the Armenian reformers, and especially the agents, open and secret, of the Turkish Government, have so long and unscrupulously misrepresented the tendencies, principles, and character of the *Huntchak* that English opinion is apt to regard this party, which is patriotic in the best sense, as the enemy of peace and law in Armenia. Their adversaries try to show that the Armenian progression, the *Huntchakists*, are opposed to law, fomenters of trouble, disorder, and massacre—in short, that they are criminals.

During the last three years I have often had occasion to put before the English public the political programme considered most practical by the party for the prompt and effective solution of the Armenian difficulty. It is that of the *Huntchak* ("The Bell," the central organ of the Armenian revolutionary party which has passed into the eleventh year of its publication), and is certainly moderate. It merely claims for the Armenians political rights of self-government, under a Christian governor nominated and chosen for a fixed period by the Great Powers. This is surely not a wild or destructive policy.

The *Huntchak* party has now existed and acted for more than ten years. From the first year of its existence it has included many young Armenians educated in Western universities. Europe has been their teacher in science, in politics, and in literature; the great Armenian writers have taught them their national history. Their hearts beat with ardent love for their people, who are groaning under a yoke of the most shameful kind—Asiatic tyranny undisguised

—and who, forced to beg for very existence under the *yatagan* of the Kurd. As ardent patriots, the *Huntchakists* have striven to do their utmost for the good of their own people, the Armenian nation. They have displayed, for years past, a wonderful activity, inflexible energy, capacity for initiative, and inexhaustible resourcefulness. By its propaganda, the *Huntchak* has raised the nation's conscience, which was withering beneath the terror. It has spread large, generous, humanitarian ideas; in a word, it has regenerated Armenian intellect, and *morale*. And this it has accomplished in a few long years.

Thanks to its work, the *Huntchak* has made itself the working representative of the political and social aims of Armenia.

The organisation of the party is of course secret. It is needless to say why, for it is more than clear that in Turkey it must be secret in order to exist at all. It "conspires" because it must; it cannot yet act openly. Its members are counted by thousands. It has ramifications throughout the whole of Turkish Armenia and European Turkey, as well as in other countries. All these branches form a compact mass, acting under one direction, and along one line of general conduct, although all are not of equal strength. Yet, during the years in which the party has grown to such proportions and such force, it has had much loss to bear. Hundreds of its members, whom the Ottoman Government's police have succeeded in arresting, have been—almost to a man—tortured, imprisoned, exiled, done to death, and fifteen have been formally condemned and executed.

The *cause* of the appearance of "revolutionaries" on the Armenian soil is, I think, clear. The cause was the condition of the Armenian people. Their life was one of continual suffering, pain, and degradation: everything was degraded—commerce, industry, agriculture, education, thought, the entire life of the Armenian race. Surely here we have the natural cause of the spirit of revolt. But this is not all.

Ever since 1878 the famous article of the Treaty of Berlin, by which six Great Powers of Europe recognised solemnly and internationally the pressing claims of the Armenians to a better existence, has existed as a dead letter (dead to this day, thanks to the criminal selfishness of the Great Powers). In this article the six Powers themselves took the responsibility for the introduction, "without further delay," of the "reforms necessary to the Armenian Provinces." But during the long lapse of memory on the part of Europe, the situation became almost desperate for the Armenians. They began to murmur and to stir. The *Huntchak* appeared, and took up the revolutionary movement. It had cried aloud from its birth, swaddled, and was in a ceaseless struggle with the Government and the police of Turkey. It continued steadily organising for reform, directing its propaganda, and agitating to this end. It spoke the word for self-defence, for the need of relying on Armenian forces, for armed insurrection. Logically it could do no otherwise. Ever since it was clear that the Armenian nation was left defenceless by Europe, which has had no regard for its own promise, the right of insurrection became the sacred right of an enslaved race, and henceforth Armenia

had to trust alone to its own strength and its own despair.

Those who live under political conditions wholly different from those which Turkey imposes upon her Christian subjects, cannot surely gainsay the claims on which the whole movement rests. They cannot altogether refuse their sympathy to the deeds and the efforts to which the Armenians have been driven by the force of circumstances, much less can they condemn them. These Armenian insurgents had a cruel and a certain knowledge of the swiftly approaching destruction of their people, and it is a great injustice to reproach them for acting as they did. They simply wished to guarantee to their countrymen, the Armenian people, what is the right of all mankind, the *right to live*.

A. N.

THE STORM

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE COUNTRY

AROUND Ararat, the majestic, the two-headed, the mountain ranges of Persia, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor meet. Ile and his consort, four-peaked Aragatz, crowned with eternal snow, have watched over the life of countless ages. From this centre the mountains slope away over the entire breadth of the country in capricious but continuous waves. Rising and falling, they roll towards the Caspian, the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean. North and west flow the three great rivers, Koora, Alis, and Jihan. From the heart of this country, too, springs Arax, the mother river of Armenia. Tossing and strident at times, then again silent and pensive, she ceaselessly pours her centuries of sorrow into the waters of the Caspian. In the South rises Tigris and his sister Euphrates, that, far below, are to rush as one vast river through the town valleys, and

then glide over the great plains beyond, broad and proud, beneath burning Southern sun. How many legends still hover over their historic waters!—What unnumbered springs, pure and cold! Everywhere there are rivers, great and small, at every step, in every corner. They brawl at the bottom of mysterious ravines; they leap with a plaintive sound over rough mountain-sides, and fall headlong, eager to lose themselves in the depths of some abyss, they tumble in huge cataracts from fearful precipices with furious chafing, break over the rocks below, and then begin the soothing song that they murmur down in the valleys, beneath the weeping willows, where they bathe the roots of all sorts of mountainous trees and shrubs. Further on, they show the full spread of their swelling tides, watering green and gracious meadows all enamelled with flowers and balmy with scent, wide plains steeped in reverie, golden corn-lands, and vast shady gardens. And in those gardens grow all sorts of beautiful, shining apples, golden and rosy-checked, delicious scented pears, clear amber-coloured grapes, glowing pomegranates with hidden treasure rich as coral, and *phishats*, whose little red husks have such an intoxicating scent. But down further South, under the burning rays of the sun, far from the sound of rivers, where Nature seems dumb and nerveless with heat, the hanging fruits of the orange and lemon trees swing with a gentle motion; the fig bursts with ripeness, letting its sweet juices drip; the proud, lithe poplar recalls the days of Liberty; and the modest olive tree speaks of Peace—how much desired! But, alas! Peace has long forsaken this paradise.

It is melancholy to view the slender growth of the plane-tree, rising so straight towards the clouds. It is melancholy also to look into the gloomy forest of oaks, pines, firs, and chestnuts, bowed beneath the weight of ages, hiding away and jealously cherishing their secrets in secluded valleys, up the sides and along the crests of mountains that are inaccessible, threatening, and dreadful . . . Sometimes the timid gazelle, graceful and agile with dark shining eyes, breaks the slumber of the woods, sometimes it is the ever-hunted chamois, starting at an unaccustomed sound, or again, the hart, standing upon a rock that overhangs a cataract, with ears alert and great black eyes wide open, in love with liberty; or it may be the roar of an angry, wounded panther.

Then there is the wild boar, that lays bare the roots of the trees, and the bear who knows no obstacle to his good pleasure. Packs of wolves abound also, ever on the watch to attack the drowsy herd, while the shepherd pipes his sweet, pathetic notes. Sly Reynard is here, too, and the hyena, that greedily ransacks the very graves for the bones of the luckless dead. Menacing gangs of jackals prowl round the villages—those villages that nestle in the valleys, sprinkle the plains, or climb the hillsides. All these savage beasts are, as it were, the masters of this country, which is at the same time so desolate and so terror-haunted.

Then, again, there are the lakes, now smiling to the gentle breeze, now glittering against the purple dawn, hiding in their lucid mirrors, the shadows of the black night-heavens, or the ineffable mysteries of moon and stars, or glancing in the sunshine of a

deep blue sky. The three largest are almost like seas: Lake Sevan, with its hidden memories of a glorious past; Lake Oormic, the witness of great historic battles; and the third, Lake Van, with its picturesque, verdant, and mountainous shores. How often in olden times, through long centuries, have the Armenian bards sung the praises of those blue waters of Van and that land Nature has blessed in such magic fashion! Those songs were inspired, and the singers themselves bewitched, by the legend of Semiramis, the Enchantress. For, carried away by her dazzling victory, that beautiful queen in her triumph was subdued by the marvellous charm of the country she had conquered.

A temperate climate prevails in this land. Although there is a long keen winter in parts, there are other districts where half the year is passed under a burning sun. Thanks to this climate, there is an immense variety of vegetation, displaying many colours; and on the very peaks of some mountains alpine roses, with petals like white velvet, bloom in the solitude.

It is, indeed, a marvellous garden, singing and thrilling with the clear notes of nightingales and all manner of birds. A garden where the pheasant suns himself with the peacock, his plumes spread into an emerald fan; where the wood-pigeons take shelter from the murderous shot of the sportsman; whence the vagrant crane takes wing for strange, far countries, bearing sad news with her to scattered patriots. The raven has his abode here, and, alas! he finds only too much prey for his hungry beak; the falcon, too, and the vulture. Far above, the lone eagle hovers and hovers over the ruined Mother Country. Suddenly,

wounded in his pride by the triumphant rage of the wild beasts below, he turns his head away, and swoops down to the whirlpool in the midst of the abyss. . . . Such news is borne afar by the vagrant crane.

This land, with its rich and fertile surface, has also veins of ore running through its depths—through the very fibres of its body—and much buried treasure even of marble, of silver, and of gold. The metal-laden springs burst from the earth like milk from the maternal breast; or, rather, like hot tears of blood, ever shed and ever flowing from the country's heart.

And what a history this land has! Whether in the darkest ages, more than 4000 years ago, known only from legends; or, later, through classic and mediæval wars until the fall of the last royal dynasty at the end of the fourteenth century; or within the last 500 years, when in different parts of the country its people still enjoyed a state of semi-independence; or, lastly, in these latter days, from the middle of the present century, when the land has lain enslaved and torn in three by Russia, Persia, and Turkey, her history has always been a struggle—and again a struggle, and a struggle without end. There was a time when she proclaimed aloud her triumphs, like the thunder repeated by a hundred echoes in its own spring skies. There was also a time when the very earth shook and groaned with sullen rage and voiceless vengeance beneath the invading feet of mighty aliens. Nor was she slow to make good her losses. But the last five centuries have indeed been sombre and baleful. Her history throughout this period is one long series of endless struggles and incessant wars for independence, for freedom—struggles at once

persevering, obstinate, and, alas! desperate. This land has never allowed her sword to rust. This is her glory, immortal, ineffaceable.

So the history comes down to the present, even to-day, in a land that might be an earthly paradise. Poor Armenia! What bloody, dismal tragedies are still being enacted against that smiling, magic background! O Mother Country! that you should have become the slave of the assassin!

CHAPTER II

THE WAYFARER

DARKNESS reigned. The sky, packed with leaden clouds, hugged the earth close in stifling embrace. The sleeping forest of ancient, broad-leaved oak brooded with its wide wings over the bosom of the high mountain range. The mysterious murmur, a muffled noise, as of some great secret conference, that melted at times into a confused incoherency and stole away into the dumb horizon, was again lost in silence. An ill-kept road wound up the mountain. On one side sheer precipice ran down into the darkness. A deep ravine yawned below, from which there arose now and again the sounds of a rushing river, shrill, broken, disconnected noises, like the cries of children in the distance. The road was deep in mud after a day of rain, which had fallen heavily for hours.

The road led to one of the villages of the township of P——. The shadowy figure of a man, scarce visible in the darkness, was walking at an even pace, noiselessly, almost stealthily, leaning heavily on a long staff. At times he stood still, and, with strained attention, gave ear to the changing sounds amid the stillnesses of the night. Then he continued his way

as before. For nearly three hours he had walked without resting. His dragging feet and bent back showed signs of weariness. Again and again he took off his fez, and wiped the sweat from his brow with his handkerchief, drawing deep breaths while he paused an instant.

Another hour passed. Ah, that interminable oak forest, pursuing the traveller with its dim murmur! Although it was only the beginning of September, the air on the heights here was keen and chill. A penetrating mist clung to the mountains. The slight autumn breeze brought whiffs of those pungent but fragrant odours, which rise out of the moist earth, up from the decaying leaves, and down from the half-rotten branches of the sodden trees.

The traveller suddenly paused. He fancied that through the midst of the vague and confused murmurs of Nature another sound had reached him. He dropped on his knees, and putting his ear to the earth, remained kneeling a moment; then he got up, and tried to peer down the track behind him. But the darkness was impenetrable; he could see nothing. He knelt down again, once more putting his ear to the earth. There was no doubt now. It was the tramp of horses that he heard; at first a muffled sound mingled with the roar of the forest, but by degrees it grew loud and distinct. Could it be, he asked himself, a band of brigands hastening down the road? Perhaps, after all, it was the Turkish *sapti's* in pursuit of him? This thought hardly troubled him, for how could they have found out so soon the way he had taken? Suddenly, he cried aloud: "Can it be Sirakan?"

At these words he clenched his fist, and, turning sharply on his heels, dashed aside into the thick of the forest.

Minutes passed—long, painful minutes. Like lightning flashes, quickly following one another in a dark sky, cruel thoughts rushed into the traveller's brain, and swiftly took flight again, sending sharp stabs to his heart. Yet at this moment he was not thinking of the dangers that threatened him. He was far, he knew, from hostile eyes.

"Sirakan?" he kept repeating to himself. "Can he have betrayed me? Can he have told the police where I was going? How right my comrades were when they said he must be closely watched. . . . But it cannot be." For some instants he inwardly revolted against his own thoughts. Had not Sirakan shown his devotion to the Cause over and over again, and willingly risked his young life? But his suspicions insisted on returning; beyond doubt it was Sirakan . . . he . . . he . . . "Ah! Sirakan!" In his wrath he groaned almost aloud, and at that very moment he heard, quite close by, a volley of Turkish oaths taken up in indistinct chorus by many voices. The traveller recognised the first voice as that of the *tcharvoosh*, Méhémet Ali, the terror incarnate of all that countryside. It was the police. With clank of weapon, noisily, menacingly, the troop of horsemen swept suddenly past the traveller. He held his breath, A minute—a long minute—went by.

While the tramp of hoofs and the voices of men were growing fainter and fainter, the traveller tried to answer various questions.

"What am I to do?" he mused. "To go on is

impossible ; to go back equally so—there, no doubt, they have turned the whole villages upside down, and made arrests by the dozen. I know the ways of the Turkish police ; they'll seize a whole crowd in the hope that somebody in it may confess himself a malefactor. It's easy enough to get tortured people to make confessions, poor devils ! ”

He laughed bitterly, and began to listen again. The thud of hoofs could now just be heard like a faint hammering on the stones.

“ How's it to be ? Which way am I to go ? ”

He left the forest and stood again in the middle of the road. But there he could hear nothing save the weird whispering among the trees, and at times, rising up from the far depth of the ravine, the clear, childish prattle of the mountain stream.

“ For ten years they've been after me,” mused the traveller, mechanically turning his steps in the direction taken by the galloping *sapties*. “ Ten years they've been after me,” he repeated, “ and can my luck have turned ? ” His eyes gleamed with a queer smile. Was it self-confidence, or a bitter presentiment that the end was at hand ? With drooping head and slow steps he went forward carelessly. A dark array of old memories, called up by that moment, was weighing heavily on his mind. His thick eyebrows bent in a scowl, and his little, deep-set, but fiery eyes seemed to sink deeper into his head. His bushy beard, already streaked with grey, almost hid from sight his thin, bony cheeks. His broad back seemed more bowed, and though he was of middle height, at that moment he seemed shrunken.

"No, there's work before me yet!" he thought, as though revived by some inner impulse. He believed in his lucky star, which, from the time he left his birthplace, the little town of Hajin, and the poor home of his parents—ten long years—had always brought him safe to harbour. His star had never failed him in the utmost perils, even in these last years—years of enforced wandering, of bitter hardship and suffering. Such had been his life ever since, in imminent danger of arrest, he had thrown up the school of which he was the master, and devoted himself heart and soul to the cause of his country's freedom. Since that hour it had been his daily life to sit with peasants in poor hut or humble cottage, talking the night through with them, speaking with them of their sufferings, unceasingly, impatiently, preaching the gospel of "*An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*," rousing their crushed spirit with high resolves and mighty aspirations. Always in hiding from his pursuers, he had more than once passed a whole day without a morsel of bread. More than once, too, the star-sprinkled sky had been the only roof over his head at night, and the snow his bed. How often, after snow-storms and heavy rains, he had, on horseback or trudging along on foot, dried and thawed himself in the sun, always with every sense strained and on the alert, like some wary stag held in chase by keen and tireless hunters. Such had been his lot for many a long year. And why? Of his own free will he had given himself up to this endless mental agitation, to this life of physical struggle. Always and everywhere, like two bright lights before his eyes, he saw his star and his aim ;

but he was well loved by the people whose rights he championed, for whose sake he bore hardship and privation gladly, and he deemed himself well repaid. "The People's Friend"—that was the simple and exquisite name they had given him, and at the thought of their love his heart grew strong once more.

Hour after hour passed by as he walked and mused. Under the canopy of low-lying cloud the night became restless with the rising wind. Everything turned to riot and frolic. The darkened forest was filled with moans and cries. The stream seemed swelling underground, whence now and again sounds as of clanging steel, weird and menacing, came in violent bursts to the surface of the earth, and were carried on the hurrying blast. Whistling over the mountain heights and roaring over the forest, the wind suddenly blew a sharp blast in the traveller's face. Then it whisked off again into the depths of the ravine. The traveller caught the faint sound of a dog's barking. What! was he so near the village? He was puzzled, and in inward trepidation dashed the drops of cold sweat from his brow. He stopped short, and his former doubts as to what was best to be done returned with fresh force. As he pondered he began walking to and fro like an uneasy spirit. In the wind's bluster he fancied he heard a voice calling him; then he caught the tramp of a galloping horse; then some one quite close seemed stealing up behind him. . . . The shrieking, tearing wind drove the clouds packing in huge masses over the sky. The East had begun to show a faint pallor, then it was hidden under the storm-clouds, then the

pale sky emerged again. Suddenly the traveller heard the scream of an owl, repeated twice in different directions. He started nervously.

• What is it ? ”

The same cry was heard again in the distance, mingling in the menacing uproar of the night with sinister effect. A moment of profound silence followed. It seemed as if the wind, the forest, and everything, had sunk into stillness with the scream.

“ I certainly heard something,” the traveller thought, and again began walking up and down. “ What are they doing over there, and over there ? ” And he pictured the two villages where at that instant, when he himself was free, so many guiltless people were perhaps being arrested on his account. A feeling of self-sacrifice began to grow articulate within him. He reproached himself for hiding like a coward in the forest from the *zapties*. Why had he not blocked their passage ? Why had he not cast ridicule on the failure of their endless pursuit of him, by voluntary surrender ? How many innocent victims he would have saved ! Or, indeed, why should not he be the first of all their number ? And a desire sprang up in him to hurry off at once to the nearest village, and give himself up. The howling wind rushed past him, the barking of a dog was borne distinctly to him amidst its roar ; then the same owl’s scream was heard again. Was it help ? Was it friends ? And the traveller himself uttered the same cry and fell to listening . . . An answer came echoing back from the direction of the mountain. Some time passed. After another interchange of the same owl-calls on

both sides, the traveller discerned in the darkness on the road the figure of a man approaching him.

"Who's there?" he shouted.

"Sako," was the answer; "Moruk?" the same voice queried.

"Yes."

In a minute the friends were in one another's arms. The man who was called "Moruk" (Beard), was no other than Zhirair Boyajian, the famous Armenian revolutionist and patriot.

After the first outburst of delight, numerous questions, and brief replies, Sako exclaimed:

"How glad I am to have found you! I was beginning to be dreadfully uneasy! We expected you at daybreak to-day. But a couple of hours ago, Méhémet Ali dropped down like a thunder-bolt upon us, and our hearts misgave us. Seeing the danger threatening you in the village, I came out to meet you and warn you."

With a feeling of warm affection, Zhirair pressed his comrade's hand

"I am in no danger, as you see, but what is going on in your village? They galloped by me. I hid in the forest."

"The village? Méhémet Ali ransacked it from end to end as soon as he reached it! They searched for you in every house, swearing at every one, and accusing people right and left of 'harbouring you. And already they've tortured several with the lash on this pretext."

"And have they made any arrests?"

"Why, that's the way these Méhémet Alis have of

showing their valour! That's all they're equal to, arresting innocent people."

"Any of the comrades?" Zhirair enquired, with obvious anxiety.

"Mako and Simonik; the others are safe. But it's all right," Sako added in a re-assuring tone; "there's not a scrap of evidence against them. What is most important is, your own position; you can't go to the village, and you ought not to be lingering long here on the highway. You will soon have to leave this countryside."

"What? and the Cause? Oh, that's impossible! I cannot think, because of any danger to myself, of throwing over plans that I must seriously talk over with you and our other comrades."

"Well, some of them are coming in the morning, all eager to see you, and impatient for new instructions and fresh information."

Zhirair did not answer; some thought had begun to fret him. He seemed afraid to ask about what had been harassing him for such hours; he feared to have his suspicions confirmed.

"But how was it that the police came after me? They didn't know?" he queried.

Sako's face darkened. "Yes," he whispered, with downcast head, "Méhémet Ali blazons it abroad that Sirakan betrayed us."

Zhirair's eyes shone wrathfully. After a minute's silence he asked: "Whom else has he betrayed?"

"No one knows."

Again a silence followed.

"Well! Let us go down to the stream in the ravine," said Sako; "it's already beginning to get

light. Directly the *saptis* leave the village, the comrades will come out to us."

And the two crossed the road, and plunged into the heart of the forest together.

"And now, good-bye, comrades! To work for Freedom is the great thing in life. To resist tyranny, is the duty of every true man. The path of duty is a hard one, but a bitter fate bids us to follow it. If any one of us falls without reaching the goal, glory to his name! But happy he who lives to see the day when the Cause is triumphant, and let him then hold sacred the names of those who have fallen in the fight. Don't lose heart! Go forth to the work, a hard but useful work; sow the seeds in the good soil of the fatherland. Toil on ever, toil on with energy and perseverance; we will build up again what is ruined"

So spoke Zhirair late at night, not long before daybreak, next day. Exclamations from several voices answered him in chorus, and they all began to take leave of him.

The night was damp, and the forest was full of uneasy whispering. The deep blue of the sky stretched wide and glorious overhead.

"Good-bye, friends."

"Good-bye! Good luck to your journey! Be careful!" the voices were heard to say.

"Don't be uneasy," cried Zhirair, who had by now crossed to the other bank of the stream, and with a sudden inspiration, he added: "Look at the sky; how brightly the morning star is shining! I am safe; that is my guiding star!"

Thine too, oh, my people!

CHAPTER III

THE POST-HOUSE

THE Post-House, for which the inhabitants of those parts commonly use the Turkish word, *merkès*, was a stone building of one storey, with a flat roof of mud, tiny barred windows, and sloping grey walls. It leaned lazily up against the bare shoulder of the low hillside. Around it stretched a boundless expanse of green plain, with here and there a little hillock standing out upon the low grass, or a solitary tree lifting a bristling round head above the earth.

Behind the house in the distance was a leafy copse, like a flock of sheep spread out over the low mountain slope, breaking the line of the horizon. Everything lay sleeping under the still warm sunshine of the second half of September. A wide track passed the post-house, and was lost in the low herbage of the plain. This was the road leading from the town of Akn to the little town of Z——.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon. The *merkès* was in unusual commotion. Inside it looked like a roomy stable, where several horses with tinkling bells were munching hay. Along the wall opposite

them stretched a wide wooden divan, which served the twofold purpose of a seat, and a bed for the people living in the station. It was also their dining-table.

Two post-office officials and a couple of policemen, the escort of the mail, were sitting on the divan, cross-legged, finishing their dinner. They considered the fare insufficient, and kept clamouring incessantly for fresh dishes from the housekeeper.

"*Evet, effendi'm*" ("Certainly, sir"), "directly," he cried, as he responded to their demands.

Post-house keepers, as a rule, do what they are told by postal officials without complaint, and for the following reason: although the posting-stations on the high roads are Government buildings, the post-horses in Turkey belong to private individuals, who receive payment from the Government for the use of them. The postal officials usually over-drive and ill-treat the horses. In order to check this, the horse-owners make themselves the masters of the station servants, the overseer and the stable-boys, who, as they are bound to be Mahometans and work for wages, always try to satisfy and propitiate the postal officials.

"Is this *shashlik* (roast meat) fit to eat, you dog?" one of the postal officials muttered discontentedly, wrinkling up his nose. He was a man of five-and-thirty, with a thick neck, a long, straight, thin nose, a short-clipped round beard, full moustaches, and a sullen expression in his long, narrow eyes. His whole manner was an attempt to make the others feel that he was the chief postal official present. He was the *tatar*, as it is called. He tried to assume the manners

of a Turkish official of high rank, treating with haughty and abusive contempt those about him, who were only "underlings"

"Coffee!" he bawled again to the overseer of the station, obviously irritated that this request had not been anticipated, and that the coffee set before him was not ready at the instant, as he still noisily chewed the last morsels of his meat

The overseer of the station a man of parts, tall, spare, and ungainly, with a cringing look on his face, rushed to and fro on hearing his call, setting cups before the party at the table, and then went to a little old stool set in the wall. Here, on a few bits of glowing charcoal, stood a special kind of copper vessel, a *ghusve*, full of coffee. The strong and pleasant aroma of this beverage, which is drunk every hour of the day in Turkey, was overpowered by the heavy, stifling odours of food and horse-dung, which hung about the station

"You've stinted the sugar, son of a camel!" the second postal official shouted angrily. He was a young fellow with a red face, bleary eyes, straggling moustaches, and full cheeks for some time unwashed and covered with black bristles. His eyes at the moment looked dim, partly because he had gulped down no less than eight glasses of *mastik* (brandy) before dinner. This aromatic drink, being forbidden to Mussulmans by their religion, is, consequently, greatly esteemed and used by them. The overseer of the station confined himself to an imploring look at the younger postal official. At that moment two police-officers rose up like apparitions, and came out of a dark corner in the station. Till that instant,

unseen in their corner, they had been mysteriously conversing together in inaudible tones.

"A good appetite to you," so one of them greeted the party at dinner, and saluted in the Turkish fashion, passing his right hand over his mouth, and raising it to his forehead; then he went out. His companion made the same movement without speaking, and, with an unmoved countenance, followed the first. A silence followed, during which the four at the table munched loudly, while the overseer of the station, standing on one side, gazed at them with a meaningless smile.

"Horses, maypole! Why are you laughing? This is the mail, not a wedding-feast!" the *tatar* shouted suddenly. He had been busy over his meal for two mortal hours, and was now serenely sipping his coffee.

The tall, spare overseer started and bustled about. While he was giving orders to the stable-boys under him, accompanying each direction with words of abuse and angry blows of his fists, a noise was heard from outside. He went at once out to the door. The *tatar's* face assumed an expression of uneasiness at the sound outside. He gulped down the last drop of coffee with a loud, gurgling noise in his throat, then slowly sucked in the smoke of a cigarette stuck into a big pipe, and getting up from his seat, moved towards the door.

A little group of travellers, riding on four mules, had come up to the station. Two of them were mule-drivers, and were on foot. Mounted upon the mules were three men, a woman and two children, one about ten years old, and the other a few years younger. Two of the men had each a child riding in front, held

on with an arm round its waist. The travellers were dressed in local costumes, wide trousers fitting tightly on the calves, a short waistcoat of peculiar cut, a broad girdle round the waist, and a fez on the head. The woman was shrouded from head to foot in a white face-cloth. Round her head ~~was~~ twisted a shawl of the same colour, her black eyes had a frightened expression, but her plain face, though rather thin and weary, was pleasant to look upon. She rode her mule as a man would ride it. One of her companions was an insignificant-looking fellow enough, while the other, a man between thirty and forty years of age, despite his black beard and gleaming eyes, was unmistakably related to the woman who rode the mule. The third traveller was well over sixty, with long white moustaches hanging down each side of his chin; his grey eyes looked out from under thick white eyebrows, already dim with age, with an interested, good-humoured gaze.

The mules came to a standstill before the station. The two police-officers, who had a little while before been carrying on an inaudible conversation in a corner of the station, regarding themselves as the guardians of order in stations and on high roads, looked at the travellers and demanded from them their *teskeré*. In Turkey no journey from one town to another is possible without those native passports. With a greeting to the mule-drivers, the police-officers approached the travellers with the question :

"Are you Mussulmans?"

"Armenians," was the answer.

"Wouldn't you like a cup of coffee?" one of the police-officers enquired, with an insinuating air. The

two elder travellers at once saw the turn things had taken. They would either have to dismount, order coffee, and pay some *kurushes*, which the police-officers were bound to get, or, failing that, would risk being harassed and rudely treated by the police on the subject of their *teskéri*, in spite of the fact that their passports were quite regular and correct. The two travellers exchanged a glance of mutual understanding. Without speaking, one of them got off his mule, handing over the boy, who was sitting before him, to the younger man. The latter, with the old man and the woman, proceeded along the road on their mules.

The mule-drivers and the two police-officers went into the station; the traveller followed them. Meanwhile the *tatar*, who had been watching the new arrivals all the while with an inquisitive look, had begun walking up and down a little way off in front of the station. He was gloomy and absorbed. It seemed as though some uneasy thoughts were troubling him. As he paced to and fro he sometimes waved his arm backwards and forwards, then opened his palm with the fingers outspread, like a cup, with a puzzled air, then stopped, and, raising his downcast head, stared fixedly into the plain. He looked with intentness into the distance—one might almost think he was trying to discover what was going on there. The slumbering plain lay without, lifeless in the glaring sunshine. The little procession of mules was peaceably pushing forward. The distance was dead. But a solitary lark could be seen sometimes, sharply cleaving the air. It flew near over the plain, then quickly turned into a dark speck in the distance, and

disappeared in the depths of the sky. Following the lark with his eyes, the *tatar* stood still and sank into thought again. At that moment his face almost lost its habitual ferocious expression, and was overcast with melancholy. It looked as though his soul were weary from an inward struggle.

By now there stood ready, waiting before the station, four horses, on one of which—the one intended for the *tatar*—the leather mail-bags were made fast, hanging heavily down on each side of the animal. The other post-servant and their two police escorts were listlessly slackening or tightening the saddles on their horses, continually running round and round them, and in subdued tones flinging occasional remarks at one another. Under one of the station walls the muleteers stood talking in inaudible tones with an air of mystery to the two station police-officers. From time to time an exclamation of assent or denial was heard. The Armenian traveller, coming out of the station, was about to set off in the direction of the little procession on the road, but observing with surprise the *tatar's* contemplative pose, he went up to him :

“What are you thinking[’] about, *tchavoosh effendi*.” He addressed the *tatar* in a frank voice, yet with a respectful intonation in it.

The *tatar*, brought back to himself at the question, and seeing an Armenian before him, was on the point of angrily abusing the *raïa* for his temerity, but the last phrase, which was superior to his position, sounded so agreeably in his ears, flattering his craze for dignity, that he raised his head, and looked[’] straight without speaking into the clever eyes of the Armenian. The

latter, not disconcerted, repeated his question in the same tone. This time the *tatar* looked away, slightly shook his head from side to side, and his face again assumed his careworn and weary expression.

"Do you see that tree?" after a short silence he spoke through his clenched teeth, with a note of dejection in his voice, and he pointed to a gigantic spreading oak, which stood up alone in the distance on the crest of a hill. "You see that tree," he repeated with a heavy sigh. "Last week, in broad daylight, the brigands fell upon the mail, carried off everything there was, and killed the *tatar*. . . ."

"And the police escort?" queried the Armenian with a look of interest.

"They do say they made off as soon as the brigands showed themselves."

"And those are the police?" the Armenian commented, with an ironical stress and a motion of his head in the direction of the two station police-officers, who were talking in low tones with the mule-drivers.

The *tatar* turned a cold glance in the same direction, and made no answer.

"Now, I wonder what will be my fate in another hour . . ." he mused, dreaming, after a minute's silence, as though talking to himself.

"Fate!" the traveller murmured in a quiet tone of resignation.

"Great is the will of Allah, of course!" the *tatar* raised his voice, stung by the thought of his position. "What is to be, will be. But such a fate can't be called a fate at all. If I were like you men, an independent traveller, it would be another thing! If I were attacked on the high road, I would give them

everything I had, and save my skin. But, as it is," he added bitterly, "one's a postal official, so one must defend the mail; they may squeeze the life out of you, break every bone of your body, one by one, but there you are, bound to defend the mail. . . . Till you're killed like a dog, you're bound not to let the bags go. . . . If you do manage any how to get off alive, then the officials put the knife to your throat. Why? You've stolen the mail yourself, they all say; you must confess where you've hidden it. Everything you have, your purse and goods, they turn inside out; they'll flay the very skin off your back—you must tell, they'll say. . . . That's my trouble, if any one cares to know!" he said emphatically, and there was genuine feeling and indignation in his voice. "I've a horse of my own, a wife, and children. . . . If I die, whose business will it be to care for them? The last words he muttered to himself, while his head sank despairingly on his breast, and he was again lost in thought. The traveller did not speak; he, too, was thoughtful.

"Who's to blame for it?" the Armenian cried with some animation. "You see," he added with a peculiar emphasis, "the state of the roads is beyond everything; the brigands have it all their own way; there's no knowing who are trying to maintain order, who's defending you, or . . ."

He did not finish the sentence. The *tatar*, who had involuntarily begun to listen to him with attention, looked expectantly at him. The traveller cast a hasty glance around him, as though to assure himself that they were far enough off and no one could hear them, and, with a hesitating voice, he went on :

"Who's to blame?" he repeated, and the pupils of his dark eyes grew darker at that instant from inward, suppressed fury. "They told us there were to be railways made; they put a tax of a *méjidié* (4½ francs) on all of us for making the lines. How often have they shut up our shops, stopped our field labour, and driven us like slaves for weeks and months together to toil for nothing, digging the earth, and making the tracks at our own expense? How many years has it been going on? And you won't find a single iron rail on the tracks to this day. . . . And here with a family, with children, we have to trail along through these deserted and perilous parts! . . . Here am I, for instance," he went on after a moment's pause. "Have I no strength in me? Am I faint-hearted? . . . If I joined you it would be all right for our party, and for you, too. If anything happened, we should know how to defend you. . . . But what's to be done?" he cried mournfully, hanging his head. "Hands are but flesh, and the body, too; and one's not got a bit of steel to fight with, whatever happens!"

He ceased, and, with a curious glance, began to watch the expression of the *tatar's* face. The latter was listening in silence, his eyes fixed on the ground.

"It's all right for you . . . you have the steel; you have weapons; if any one strikes you, you can strike back. But we, we're *raïas*! . . . We've no rights, and no weapons. . . . If they kill us like chickens, we daren't squeak. . . . And woe to a man, if, in self-defence, his cudgel comes down heavily and smashes some robber's head open! There's no escape for us then; the torments of hell come upon

us. . . . And they don't let us breathe ; for one, they kill ten of us. . . . There's no defending ourselves, either ; you're a murderer, and it's all over with you ! You are seized and flung into prison."

At another time the Armenian's words would not have been uttered with impunity to any servant of the Government, even to a common soldier. The latter, indeed, is given to seeking and inventing pretexts for showing his authority over the *raia*. * But at that instant the *tatar's* heart was heavy with other cares, and while a part of the traveller's words struck him as something new, the rest only reached his ears in snatches.

" *Tchorbatchi*, you will be late !" the mule-drivers shouted suddenly, saying good-bye with a noisy roar of laughter from the station police and the overseer, who had joined their group. Mussulmans commonly apply the designation *tchorbatchi* to the Armenians, by which an allusion is made to the lavishness and hospitality of the Armenians.

Taking leave of the *tatar*, the traveller hastened at a light run in the direction of the little cavalcade, which was by now some distance away

Whispering something quietly to the station police, and again shouting with laughter, the mule-drivers ran after the traveller.

The *tatar* started at the noise as though waking from a dream. He looked about him like a man half asleep, and noticed the Armenian running far away in the plain, but his stern and complaining voice seemed still ringing in the *tatar's* head. He gave another start, seemed to shake himself together, set his fez straighter on his head, and

went up to the horses. He scrutinised the saddle-girths and straps of the mail-bags, and, putting his foot into the stirrup, sprang with a resolute action on to the horse, gave it a smart lash with his whip, and dashed off towards the deserted plain. His three companions got on their horses and followed him. . . .

“Oh, I was ready to die with fear! Why were you so long, Sako?” the woman riding the mule said with a sigh, when the Armenian, who had talked with the *tatar*, reached her. This Armenian was no other than Sako, whom we have already met.

“It was nothing, sister, be of good courage; Shabin-Garahissar is still far away. . . Your husband wandered about these deserted parts when he was on his way out of the country,” he added in an encouraging and gentle voice, and going up to the old man, he took the little boy from him, and setting him on his mule, seated himself behind him.

There was silence in the party. The four postal officials, who had long ago overtaken and passed the mule party, could be seen in the distance. The sun was scorching. A hush lay upon everything. Nothing could be heard but the rhythmical footsteps of the slowly moving mules. Sako’s eyes rested on a sparrow, hopping closely, pecking in the grass. The sight of this restless bird stirred a vague pain in his heart; how like her is the Armenian! . . .

“A wayfarer, a wanderer!” Sako murmured mournfully to himself, his eyes upon the bird.

CHAPTER IV

PILGRIMS

THE shadows of evening were closing in. The wind had risen and blew right over the length and breadth of the plain. Heavy, grey mist wreaths trailed across the sky. The sun pierced at times through the dense rain-clouds, scattering golden sands over the heavens. A fine, drizzling rain made the air misty. The horizon hung low all round, lost in clouds. The plain lay like a great sea in which, in the misty distance, a long row of trees stood up, in a dark-green ridge, like a far-away shore. Sometimes this ridge glittered, as it were, tremulously in the sun's rays, when they emerged from behind the cloud masses. Here was the town of Z——, whose white houses flashed in the occasional snatches of sunshine from the midst of dark-green gardens. A few minarets thrust their slender, pointed towers boldly above the rest of the town. A little to one side the cone-shaped cupola of the Armenian Church slumbered in the shade. In many places slim plane-trees tossed their high heads proudly. Beyond the town, in the far distance, loomed a chain of mountains.

The wayfarers were still moving onwards.

"We shall soon be there;" the silence that had prevailed was broken by the old man, on catching sight of the town in the distance.

"In two or three hours," observed Sako.

"With God's blessing," added the third man of the party.

"With God's blessing!" laughed the old man . . . "But what's the good of talking! There've been many good days in my life by now, and see, mark you, never a day has passed that I have not called ten times over on that same help. But look you, I've had no luck for all that! My father, your grandfather, lay at his death on a soft, luxurious sofa smoking his *narguile*; that sofa, with the house and garden he left, I've had to hand over to the Turk before my death. And soon it'll be my turn to die; while, as for you, Sako, you'll be lucky if you're left free to lick your paws like a bear when you die." The old man ended up in a half-jesting tone, and again he gave a short, abrupt laugh.

Sako shrugged his shoulders and made no reply. All were silent. The old man's words, though uttered in a jesting tone, had obviously sent a death-like chill over all of them.

"Ah, you are always making such grim jokes!" the young woman exclaimed discontentedly a little later.

"It's life, dear daughter, life!" the old man ejaculated in a tone of great significance, and after a moment's silence, he added bitterly, and at the same time, jestingly: "Look you, you've given little creatures life, and bid them to the world's marriage-feast as it were . . . and they'll have to suffer in

the future, as I do now! If nowadays there were any one to do justice in the land, and we were not helpless, then it would be another thing!"

The old man ceased, and his head dropped.

"Look, the sky is all aglow with fire," the old man began again, looking at the flare of the sunset blazing behind the clouds that covered the whole horizon. "But look you," he went on, repeating his favourite phrase, "our life, too, is all in flames; no repose, no resting-place, even our tears are dried up by the fire!"

"Why, what should we weep for?" commented Sako.

"If they revile and beat us, what are we to do? How can we help weeping?"

"You never tried reviling them in return?"

"But if we revile them, nothing's gained, and they only clap you in prison or carry off your goods. . . . In our time we always did everything amicably."

"Amicably!" scoffed Sako, "but were you any better off for that? All you did in your time was to encourage the savages; and when they plundered you, you humbled yourselves before them."

"What's the use of saying that, my son? We can't help ourselves—that's the thing! We're hemmed in by enemies, cruel enemies. . . . Fate, to be sure! . . . Though look you, things might perhaps have been different!" the old man ended up, and, hanging his head dejectedly, he was silent.

Meanwhile night had come on, and it was dark. The green ridge of the town had vanished from sight. In silence the little company moved steadily and monotonously onwards. For some time past the

muleteers had been talking among themselves in barely audible tones. Sako could not help noticing it. He got off his mule, and, handing the little boy to the old man, went up to the woman, and walked by her side.

"Yes, sister," he said kindly, "it's very hard to have to give up one's own people and wander over the earth."

The young woman sighed.

"And it is close to here that my husband used to be in hiding?"

"Yes."

"An accursed life!" muttered the old man, who was visibly fretted by some train of thought. "Yes, look at me, now! I've been a wanderer all my life. . . . And from no wish of my own, just as it is now. . . . But there, it's Fate! and my own daughter and grandchildren I've turned out of the home of their fathers . . . and my son-in-law, away somewhere in America . . . lands, and home and all I had, sold. . . . But look you, your brother's in Shabin-Garahissar; we shall see whether he can find work for us . . . or . . . As for you, Sako . . ."

The old man's voice quavered and broke. He heaved a deep sigh.

"But why keep grieving over it?" Sako began: "What else could you do but sell it? You sold everything, of course, for less than a fifth of what it was worth; you'd have lost even that fifth if you hadn't. Think of all the levies and taxes, and then the goodwill of the officials, and then, too, debts to the moneylenders cropping up none knows whence. . . . It was a piece of luck, indeed, to find a purchaser. . . ."

For there's no trade and no roads to take the crops and garden produce to market. . . . And indeed there is not much in the way of crops! Whole fields out yonder have lain untilled, and the earth's like a stone, and weeds are everywhere . . . because, as you very well know, there's no chance to store away what you do raise by your toil; but you must hand over everything for taxes on the bread." . . .

"You're right, Sako, you're right," sighed the old man.

"But you've lost nothing by selling; now, anyhow, you have a little money. And out there you'll have my younger brother Simon with you; he's young and has his wits about him, and he 'is a man to carve money out of stone,'" Sako reminded his father consolingly

"So, if I keep well and strong, your old age shall never see want, father," the younger traveller, Simon, declared reassuringly.

"You shall make me my coffin, my lad," the old man sighed jestingly, alluding to Simon's trade as a carpenter.

"Ah, if I were only dead! What will they say next?" the young woman exclaimed in a voice of sorrow and reproach. All were silent.

"The old man is right," mused Sako, still walking beside his sister. "The household, the home, everything, is broken up, of course." He remembered as a lad hearing from his grandfather that the garden and cornfields and meadows and house—all their belongings, which his father had just sold for a mere song—had been owned for long years back by their ancestors. Whole generations of them, one after another, had been attached to the soil, and they had

been its masters, its tillers, its servants, its slaves. The hard conditions of their toil, and the system of taxation, had been far more keenly felt for the last thirty or forty years. Money had grown scarcer and scarcer, while the whole estate was worked in the old-fashioned style, after the patriarchal traditions. But long ago the peasants had been ruined. Their lands had been bought up by the larger landowners, who hired labourers to till their land. But what need had they to hire? Almost all the working people were in their clutches; they forced them to work for nothing, and on one side the usurers came to crush them further, and on the other the Government with its arbitrary taxation, and next the officials, and other plunderers of all kinds! How were men to work? And for whom? There was no chance of working for themselves. Yes, to be sure, many were like his father, or in worse case even than he; they had sold or even abandoned their lands, and gone off to foreign countries to gain their daily bread. . . . Add to all this political persecution and official corruption, and the brutal reprisals wreaked by the ferocity of the conquering Turk, national oppression and religious persecution . . . and it becomes easy to understand why generations of luckless Armenians have had reason to sigh. With good reason the young man echoed his father's laments, and grieved in secret.

"Utterly ruined, utterly ruined!" Sako muttered to himself. Utterly ruined! His father's house? or his people? or the land? . . .

Earth was by this time completely shrouded in the black veil of night. The murky sky hung low, heavy and dim with a continual drizzle of fine rain. The

little party on the road were as silent as though they were dead, never moving from the same position. There was no sound but the regular and monotonous thud of the mules' light hoofs on the damp earth.

Suddenly, through the hushed darkness of night, they heard cautious voices, to which the mule-drivers responded in Kurdish. . . . The travellers were on the alert. In the darkness no one was to be seen; even the mule-drivers' figures could be discerned only as vague, misty shadows. It was as though they were addressing mysterious apparitions. But still they talked, and voices other than theirs were heard, though the words could not be distinguished. Some time passed, the party still moved onwards. Then came the sound of noisy farewells, and three shadows glided past Sako, who could make out nothing except that they wore Kurdish dress. And again all was silence. The shadows vanished as mysteriously as they had appeared.

"What is it?" the old man whispered to Sako, who had gone up to him.

"Did you catch anything of their talk?"

"No."

"What a dark night!" murmured the young woman, when Sako was once more on a level with her. . . . "Are the children asleep?" she added anxiously.

"Yes, they're asleep."

"Asleep!" mused Sako bitterly; "and so are we, Armenians, asleep. Now it is night, but is it lighter for us by day? Our life, too, is a night—a dark, eternal night no eye can pierce!"

CHAPTER V

THE "KHAN"

IT was late in the evening by the time the little group of travellers reached Z——, a town in the vilayet of Sivas. The travellers stopped at a *khan*, and Sako was already arranging with the muleteers for an early start next morning, when two *saptiés* came up and demanded their *teskérés*.

"They've been inspected and verified three or four times already," said Sako in a tone of displeasure.

"No matter, hand them over!" was the curt rejoinder of the Sultan's servants, with supercilious and impatient glances.

Sako knew there was nothing to be done but to satisfy their demands or give them *bakshish*. He knew that, thanks to the tyrannical caprice of the Government, the lowest *saptié* is a man of authority, who can demand a *teskére* whenever he chooses. This is not the written law of the land, but it is jealously exacted. Indeed, all the written laws make a fair show on paper, but in practice take their colour from the caprice of each individual servant of the Sultan. Sako handed them the *teskérés*, and went off into the common room of the *khan*.

The *khans* in Turkey are inns of a sort. They are, generally speaking, rambling buildings with a number of low, raftered rooms, supported on timbers, with mud floors, almost destitute of furniture, and without such a thing as a bed. These rooms are usually occupied by travellers going a long distance, or by those who are willing to pay extra to avoid being in the common or public room. In the present case, this room consisted of a big, barrack-like apartment, with high, bare, dirty walls. Big lamps, dim with dust, hung in several places, and shed a faint, yellowish light. Here, in the public room, a motley crowd was gathered to spend the night together—peasants from the neighbourhood or the nearer villages, and travellers from various towns—each paying a few Turkish *paras*, coppers of small value.

Outside in a large courtyard, underneath the open sky, were the horses, oxen, mules, and asses, which had brought whole caravan-loads of different kinds of goods and produce from the surrounding districts.

On the night of the arrival of the little company of Armenians, the public room of the *khan* presented an indescribable scene. It was like an ant-hill, in which a mass of all sorts and conditions of men—Turks, Kurds, Circassians, Greeks, Armenians—were continually moving to and fro. Like bees, swarming and buzzing about a hive, the mass of people were coming and going in groups all the time, with constant movement and bustle. With their sundry shouts, exclamations, and talk, this crowd of people speaking different tongues raised a fearful din and hubbub. There were men in full trousers, hanging loose between the legs, and close-fitting about the ankles. Others wore

trousers perfectly tight from the hip to the ankle. Some were bare-footed, some wore the broad basket slippers peculiar to the district, and the *sipka*, a garment resembling a waistcoat; many had their chests bare and a long, full cloak thrown over their shoulders; others wore a garment resembling a nightgown, completely covering them, and widening out from the shoulders to the feet like a bell. Here were *tchalma* (turbans) of all colours and sizes, and red fezes. All were humbly, even poorly dressed, and extremely threadbare garments were variegated with a mosaic of patches, though rags, too, were of frequent occurrence. And all these various and parti-coloured costumes blended into a uniform grey, stone-coloured tint.

Some sat on packages and bales of goods, others were stretched at full length on the ground. Discussions were going on among the many different groups, and there were sounds of disputing, loud laughter, shrieks, and shouts. Here a group were playing cards, or some game of chance, with alternations of laughter and abuse; there, a little way off in a corner, a group were sitting cross-legged in a circle, smoking *narguils*, and passing the pipes from one to another in turns. Their faces were listless and fatigued. With their eyes stolidly fixed upon one another they rarely spoke, and soon sank into silence. At a little distance many were already lying on improvised beds on the ground, sound asleep, snoring loudly. Some seated apart from the groups, were eating their solitary meal of bread and cheese or vegetables, and drinking coffee. Here and there eager peasants, closely packed together, haggled over their wares. The place was filled, not only with travellers and

business folk, but with loafers and beggars, who came in the hope of obtaining, through some one's charity, a shelter for the night in the *khan*; besides vagrants and brigands, who came to select the caravan they could plunder on the high road. Suddenly, in the midst of the general hubbub, a soprano voice broke into quavering trills; the metallic clang of the *kémantché*, an instrument resembling a violin, was heard; some one began to beat a drum, and, with a ringing chord, a song started by the drinking party went echoing among the rafters, to be lost again in the general uproar. At the other end of the room a knot of people surrounded a lean, withered old man with a yellow face, who had seized a young lad by the collar, and kept a tight hold of him while he abused him mercilessly, shaking all over, and spluttering on to his white but dirty, unkempt beard, stained yellow with tobacco. The crowd around them laughed noisily one moment over the witticisms of the bystanders, and then fell again to shouting and screaming.

"Give him the *para*," bawled a voice persistently, again and again addressing the lad. The man who was shouting thus was a tall, lean figure, with prominent cheek bones, a *tchalma* on his head, and about his body the long garment known as a *féradjé*; he kept haranguing the crowd, and directing savage looks at the lad.

"You took a *para* too much for the coffee, you thief!" the old man screamed unceasingly in a hoarse voice.

"Yes, give him the *para*, or the poor man will go bankrupt," cried a young fellow in the crowd, jeering

at the old man, and smiling cynically, while he rolled his oily eyes under their swollen lids.

A roar of laughter greeted this sally. So the endless abuse went on on all sides ; now jeers were heard at the old man, who kept on screaming the same words : "Give me that *para*, give it up, thief !" and then at the youth, a servant of the *khan*, who, in a half-tearful, half-angry voice, kept up a shrill monotonous appeal to the old man to let him go.

The din in the public room never ceased for a moment. A thick cloud of *naigulé* and cigarette smoke hung over it. The piles of packages and bales of goods—of salt, of wheat, and of barley—gave the place the aspect of a market. An abominable stench filled the air, which was the more stifling from the smell of the beasts that came in from outside.

Generally speaking, the *khans* in Turkey are of this character. In the more frequented ones, the same noise, the same uproar, the same atmosphere, is the rule every hour of the day. The motley crowds continually change and replace one another, all with the same bustle of buying and selling, the same weary struggle for daily bread, the same nervous activity expended on the same petty cares, the same mulish impatience, the same obstinacy, vices, and passions. These *khans* are used as a market by the peasants, as shops by the merchants, and as a resort by the police. The *saptiés* make a good business of their petty extortions, whilst the keepers of the *khans*, for their part, rob the travellers too. The main life of each town centres in its *khan*. They are the chief arteries of commerce in Turkey, and the only thing in the way of hotels for travellers.

CHAPTER VI

WITH THE BIM-BASHI

AFTER hiring a room the little company was just settling down to rest, when the proprietor of the *khan* entered, a tall man, with plump, clean-shaven cheeks, long, ample moustaches, and small, severe-looking eyes. With an unsmiling face, but in a kindly voice, he wished the children's mother pleasant dreams, and, turning to Sako, told him that his presence was required by the bim-bashi, Chief of the Police, and that two *saptis* were waiting for him downstairs.

The old man growled out an oath in his irritation. He had just lain down in his clothes on an improvised bed, stretched on the ground with a sack for a pillow and his cloak for a covering.

After the first general pause of confused silence, "A good night to you, Sako!" he quavered ironically, and there was a bitter note in his voice. "Be off!" and he added with a nervous laugh: "Good luck to you in the morning, and may the charm bring you luck!"

The young woman's eyes filled with tears, but she said nothing as she gazed sorrowfully at the

children, who were already sleeping peacefully. Simon, who was making himself a bed on the floor, coughed drily once or twice, looked at his brother, but he, too, said nothing.

Sako hesitated; to remain was impossible, but what would happen if he went? He passed his hand over his forehead, his eyes fixed on the floor. Had they got wind of anything? And his inward uneasiness grew as his eyes met his sister's sad, despairing look. Involuntarily he cast a troubled glance at the children. His heart throbbed violently. But there was no alternative; they had summoned him, they were waiting. A few more seconds of hesitation, and then, as if ashamed of his weakness, he turned abruptly towards the *khan* keeper, and said briefly: "I am coming."

Some time after, Sako and the two *sapti's* were passing through the doors of a little, old, ordinary-looking building, the ground floor of which served as stables for the *sapti's* horses. The police station itself consisted of two rooms, one rather larger than the other. The first was long, narrow, low-pitched, and had a mud floor, and two little barred windows. The plastered walls, grey with dirt, were hung with revolvers, guns, sabres, horses' reins, and straps. A wooden shelf ran round the walls, at about a man's height from the ground. Bullets and cartridges, bread and cheese, dishes and tiny coffee-cups, lay there in disorder among papers and official documents. In the middle of the room, near one of the windows, stood a little square table, very ordinary-looking, upon which lay a glass ink-bottle, a reed pen, and some manuscript papers covered with dust. A worn-

out slipper had been flung by some chance on the same table, and there it had, doubtless, lain for many a long day, for it was thickly coated with dust. Saddles and harness lay where they had been cast down on the floor. Against one wall was a large, almost square sofa, covered with common threadbare rugs. Two lamps, hanging on the walls, gave a dismal light.

Four persons were seated cross-legged upon the sofa; they were dressed in the uniform of Turkish officials, their coats unbuttoned. They were playing cards, keen-eyed, absorbed, unsmiling. Sometimes they uttered brief exclamations or oaths, flung without distinction at their cards or their partners. An iron *narguilé* stood by them, and they passed it from one to the other. And each in turn sucked in the strong smoke with long, deep breaths, blowing it out again in thick clouds from their mouths, opening their eyes, and coughing huskily. In another corner of the same room, several *saptis*, seated on the ground, were finishing their supper, now and again exchanging brief remarks, whilst they continued to chew. Alone, in another corner, one of the *saptis*, his face turned to the wall, appeared to be rather fidgety. At one moment he buttoned up his uniform, then unbuttoned it again; now thrust his big hand in his trouser pocket, drew something out, examined it, and put it back again; then adjusted the collar of his uniform, blew his nose, and coughed. At last he succeeded in attracting the Chief's attention.

"Kutchug *tchavoosh*, is not that brute here yet?" suddenly a loud husky voice was heard to say.

The *saptié*, who was by himself in the corner, coughed twice, quickly buttoned his uniform, and went out of the room without uttering one word. The man with the loud voice was seated on the sofa, his face turned towards the door. After having shouted to the *tchavoosh*, he began to smoke the *narguilé*, going on all the time with the game. He was a stout, broad-shouldered man about fifty, with heavy checks. Below the nose two purple lips protruded, covered with an ample moustache above the short grizzled beard. His big grey eyes had a cold and glassy stare. On the top of the thick head, above the low forehead, reposed a fez, discoloured like the collar, cuffs, shoulder-straps, and breast of his uniform. His fat, squat-fingered hands, swollen and hairy, were at this moment nervously trifling with the cards. This was a sign that the bim-bashi was having bad luck at play to-night.

"Ahmet *tchavoosh* is not here yet," Kutchug announced as he entered, and his dark eyes glistened, his fine dandified face brightened. The bim-bashi lost his temper.

"I'll teach the brute! Instead of looking for the *giaour*, he's boozing at the *khan*." And turning suddenly to his partner, he cried: "No, Halié *mulazim*, you cheat in your play—you cheat, you cheat!" and he prolonged the last words emphatically. His opponent defended himself, and all the others joined in the dispute.

During this episode Kutchug *tchavoosh* could hardly contain himself; he was highly delighted. At one moment he ran up to the card-players and addressed a few words to them, then he went off laughing to

the *saptiés*. Ahmet *tchavoosh's* tardiness and the bim-bashi's anger were not the only reasons for this sudden glee.

"Very well, I meant to give some important orders to Ahmet *tchavoosh*, but now you, Kutchug *tchavoosh*, shall carry them out, for you have more sense. You know what you're about, and are sharper in doing what you're told," said the bim-bashi, as though he intended to give Kutchug *tchavoosh* an agreeable surprise. But the words were scarcely out of his mouth, when he struck the sofa furiously with a card, knitted his thick eyebrows, and gave his orders in broken sentences, still going on playing.

"Listen to me, Kutchug *tchavoosh*. This very night—midnight would be best—you will go to that infidel Melkon's house. Take ten *saptiés* with you. Do you hear?"

"Yes, *effendi*," replied the other gleefully.

"Good. You must search the whole place, you understand?—in the cushions, the beds, the chests, the cupboards. Poke your nose into every corner . . . Wait a minute! Do not forget the cellars, examine the walls, too, and look under the floors. See that not a single letter, not a single scrap of paper remains. Bring everything here . . . You may find something worth having there, you hear me? The family is a very rich one; do you understand?"

"Yes, *effendi*," Kutchug *tchavoosh* answered, with a knowing air.

"But mind this! everything is to be brought here—everything, mind you!—or you'll suffer for it." And he shook a threatening finger with a cold, severe air.

"Melkon himself is to be brought here," he added,

after a moment's silence; "and his son and his son-in-law, mind you!"

"All right."

"The ace is mine!" bawled out the bim-bashi suddenly, greatly delighted, breaking off his orders.

"You are wrong!" cried out his opponent. The bim-bashi, crimson with fury, swore and shouted in a voice of thunder.

"I'll make Melkon, the low hound, remember the bones of his ancestors! Ah! the dirty brutes of Armenians, *raias*, they are faithless to our *padishah*, the scoundrels! And this Melkon is well off," he announced, lowering his voice with a thoughtful air. "I'll skin him alive! I'm not the bim-bashi if I don't skin him alive! He shall stay in prison and reflect upon the vanity of riches" And addressing Kutchug *tchavoosh* with renewed fury, he cried: "Eh! do you hear me?"

"Yes, *effendi*."

At this moment the door opened, and a *saptié* entered. "I have brought the man," he announced simply.

"I have brought the man," the bim-bashi mimicked in shrill tones, mouthing the words with a grimace. "Brute!" he shouted after a short silence, and threw his cards aside with an abrupt gesture. "Brute!" he repeated furiously, "how dare you be late when the business is so urgent?"

The other did not move. After a few instants the bim-bashi calmed down a little, and asked in a confidential tone: "Well?"

"Well, he had hired a private room at the *khan*."

"H'm," growled the bim-bashi significantly.

"They do say at the *khan* that he has plenty."

"Well?"

"You might squeeze him a little."

"H'm," muttered the bim-bashi again, and added with sudden rage: "What has that to do with you, brute? How dare you be late on business so serious? Bring him in."

Ahmet *tchavoosh* went out and re-appeared after a few minutes with Sako. There was a stir in the room. The gamblers quitted their places, and sat down one either side of the bim-bashi on the sofa. All eyes were fixed on Sako, who remained standing in the middle of the room. He glanced round, and his eyes fell upon the bim-bashi, who had instantly assumed a solemn air, knitting his brows, and gazing coldly and fixedly upon Sako. The latter could not help an almost imperceptible smile. The obstinate silence was unbroken, and Sako's lips began to quiver with indignation. With a movement of impatience he looked questioningly at the bim-bashi. He, however, as inquisitor, remained silent and motionless, and the others imitated him, all with an air of reserve and occasional coughs, trying to impart an aspect of solemnity to the assembly. With unperturbed countenance, but inwardly uneasy, Sako looked enquiringly into the eyes of the bim-bashi, which wore a more and more obstinate expression, as who should say: "It is for me to question." In reality it was the vision of gold that was dazzling the functionary's eyes.

"You must always put on that air with them, always," he said to his subordinates sometimes, in authoritative tones. "Even if you know nothing of

what's passing in the mind of those people, try to keep your eyes fixed on theirs, and it'll happen sometimes that they think their secret is known, and get confused. The whole art of being a good police official rests on the air you put on."

And he tried to apply this art in the present case with comic gravity.

Thus more than five minutes passed in silence. Sako, ill at ease, began to get inwardly irritated. What evil trick was this savage going to play him? Was he thinking of denouncing him as a revolutionary, in order to plunder him more effectually afterwards? To think that his life at this moment depended on these brutal imbeciles! Very bitter were his thoughts, and for an instant, like a furtive and lugubrious shadow, there passed before his eyes the whole life of a people writhing in the same foul clutches. And he stood pensive, his thoughts far away, whilst his eyes were mechanically fixed upon the bim-bashi. The latter, at length, began to feel a little awkward; he coughed several times, wiped his moustache and beard, and, grave and severe, assuming the tone of a high functionary, he addressed Sako.

"Where were you born?"

Sako, absorbed in thought, made no reply.

"Infidel dog!" howled the bim-bashi, "are you asleep? Where do you come from?" he added.

"From Arabkir," replied Sako laconically.

"And your name?"

Sako replied.

"You have other persons with you; how many are they?"

"I have sent you all the *teskérs*."

"Of course I know what you have sent, but I ask you the question, you dog!"

"Two other men, a woman, and two children," said Ahmet *tchavoosh*, pleased to get a word in.

"Will you reply or not, *giaour*? I'll put hot irons on your tongue."

"*Kiatib effendi*" ("Secretary"), "where are the *teskérs*?" asked the bim-bashi addressing a young man with a smooth, rosy, sleek, shaven face, and large eyes, bloodshot and dull, and innocent of thought.

The *kiatib* at once began to search in his pockets, which he turned inside out several times, but was at last obliged to look on the sofa where he had been sitting. Well used to such ways, the bim-bashi waited patiently. At last the *teskérs* were found.

"See if they are in proper form," he commanded the *kiatib*.

This person unfolded the papers, and began to examine them; read something in a low voice, turned over the leaves, and then turned them back again, and bending towards the bim-bashi, whispered some indistinct words.

"The *teskérs* are not regular," the bim-bashi declared, turning his evil face towards Sako.

"They are regular; and up till now they have been examined everywhere, both when it was necessary and when it was not," Sako said, preserving his calm demeanour.

"But I tell you they are not regular," roared the bim-bashi.

"They are not regular; the thing's impossible!" shouted voices from all parts of the room. A

dispute ensued; the bim-bashi, swearing, howling, and vociferating, repeated his dictum. The others added their voices to the uproar. Sako's voice was drowned, and at last he was silent. His anxiety increased. He felt himself at that instant at the mercy of these functionaries, who all fell upon him when he opened his mouth. The uproar seemed to him long and painful. At last, when the tumult subsided, the bim-bashi made the following declaration in calm, grave tones:

"You must pay four *méjidiés* for each *teskérté*."

Sako tried to protest. The law exacted one *méjidié* for each *teskérté*, while four Turkish pounds had to be paid in order to procure them.

"I tell you once for all, you must pay down here four *méjidiés* for each *teskérté*," cried the bim-bashi furiously, dwelling on each word. "This is too much," he added. "These dogs of *raïas* fancy themselves real *padishahs*. Before long these infidels will be trying to trample on the laws of our great Prophet."

These words were enough for the Mussulmans. There were repeated exclamations of indignation. Sako felt that he was in danger. All this might lead to imprisonment. A cold sweat rose to his brow at this thought. A moment after, anguish clutched at his heart, when involuntarily he recalled the little room in the khan — his old father, his brother, his poor sister, who perhaps at that very moment were filled with black misgivings. He thought, too, of the children, little unconscious martyrs, the frail playthings of the destiny of others; poor lambs, they slept, their future un-

certain, and their present . . . What would become of them if he, Sako, was put in prison? Their mules would be confiscated, his father and his brother arrested, whilst his sister . . . he trembled, not daring to follow his thoughts further.

At this moment the bim-bashi coughed loudly. During the last five minutes of quietness he had been talking in low tones to the *mulazim*.

At last he cried: "The laws of the State must be respected. As far as I can see you are a peasant, and ignorant of the world's ways. I don't want to waste my precious time on you, pay down the money and be off with you."

Sako, searching the instant before for a way out of his critical position, had a moment's hesitation when it came. His pride suffered to see himself so ill-used by these cowards. And in his inward wrath, he flashed a piercing glance upon the bim-bashi.

The latter became confused, and his face reddened all over. In his embarrassment he turned away his face, coughed several times, stammered some indistinct words, and, to hide his confusion, began to blow his nose in a noisy fashion. He had just remembered an event which discomposed him at the moment. In his mind's eye he saw a murder which had taken place a few months previously at Arabkir. There the dagger of a revolutionary had revenged the sorrows of a whole province, where a certain Ussuf *tchavoosh* had ruled as absolute master. And the thought of the bleeding body of this redoubtable *tchavoosh* terrified the bim-bashi. Though he was far from putting down Sako as a revolutionary, his frank, indignant look disturbed him so far, that now his sole pre-occupation was to get

rid of him. As soon as he had recovered from his first alarm, he said to Sako in a tone of indulgence and generosity :

"Very well, so be it. I see you are a sensible man, and a good subject of his Majesty the Sultan. We understand one another, don't we? So now, instead of the four *méjidiés* exacted by the law for each *teskévé*, I'll only ask for three," and inclining his head with a pensive air, he exclaimed : "What a world it is ! One has to take what one can get."

Sako paid the money, and they let him go.

CHAPTER VII

TAX-GATHERING

THE village was turned upside down. From time to time a few peasants, haggard-eyed and anxious, hastened along the chief street. Breathless and oppressed with fear of the approaching danger, they came, and, in a flash, disappeared into the neighbouring alleys, and again the broad street lay deserted. In every one of the straggling line of larger houses was confusion. The master of one of them hurried up and down, trying to do everything at once, and doing nothing; the eldest girl cowered weeping in a corner, the scared children, not understanding the bustle, kept getting in their father's way, and clinging awkwardly to the folds of their mother's gown. She, beside herself, scolded them crossly, and kept continually going out and coming in again, banging the doors of the rooms, calling and crying aloud.

In one of the rooms sat an old man with bowed head and eyes cast down. He kept quavering out a prayer, while he turned his rosary again and again in his trembling hands, and crossed himself from time to time as he raised his eyes piously upwards.

Suddenly the mistress entered, and in her haste and terror her shaking voice seemed to tumble out her words anyhow.

"Old Mansoor's house is done for!" she cried. "The tax-gatherers, the brutes! they came there last night and outraged the girls. Mansoor's sons tried to save their wives, but they were all beaten, and the men tied them up with ropes. . . . My God!" she stammered, "if they were to come here!"

The old man, listening with ashen face, did not speak; his head sank lower on his breast.

"They say the two sons are utterly broken down," the woman went on again breathlessly, "and their old grandmother and their wives do nothing but cry . . . Oh! oh! I would rather be dead than see what may happen here! . . . They say, too, that old Mansoor is dead, from a stroke—God save his soul! The wretches left nothing in his house . . . they have taken all the goods. They say the taxes must be paid in ready money. . . . Oh, my God! what ruin for us! . . . Mansoor's family is broken up. Cousin Petros' family is frightened to death; they've managed to send the girls to the neighbouring village. Ah! what's to be done with my child, my Hasmik? What shall I do? They will catch her and do her some mischief . . ." And she broke off began to weep, and, weeping, hurried out of the room.

"They have burned Arakel all over the body with red-hot irons! Burned him, *burned him!* He is dying!" shouted one excited peasant to another who was hastening from the other end of the road. And the two men, running without stopping, passed

one another, and disappeared into the open jaws of the alleys.

In the road, silent and dead under the blazing sunshine, shrieks could be heard coming from within the houses. Above the village the air seemed full of a dull, continual noise, spreading from all parts; and at intervals from the South there arose a shrill outcry, a heart-rending clamour, dying away again into waves of the same heavy spreading murmur. And these waves of sound rolled on like a menacing wind above the roofs of the houses, while within, the consternation was general. Terror hung over the village and on the men's faces, as though a general attack was at hand from an army of conquering barbarians, who would plunder, strip the houses, outrage the women, and put all the men to torture.

In one of the northern alleys several peasants were grouped together.

"When these brigands came to Grigor's they threw his corn to their horses," said a peasant, still young, despite his pale, wan face.

"May their breed rot! May their beastly faith die with them in hell!" began another peasant, cursing. He was a little, withered man of about forty, with eyes gleaming in a face pitted with small-pox.

The young peasant continued his narrative, his voice never losing its accent of terror.

"As soon as they got into the courtyard, those beastly *sapitiés* began kicking up a row.' Grigor was trembling, the girls hid themselves in the corners, and the sons ran out to the fellows and helped them off their horses like guests."

"How do you know all this?" asked, in an incredulous voice, an old peasant who had just joined the group.

"Why, I was there myself the other night. . . . Poor Grigor bent his back double before these villains. 'May it please you, may it please you,' he was saying all the time as he led them into his house."

"Well, he couldn't do anything else, could he? It was his only chance. Perhaps they're less brutal when you're civil to them," said another peasant, as though he were excusing Grigor for some crime.

"What!" scowled the pock-marked man. "Those dogs! they ought to be killed . . . the damnable breed!"

"Oh, that's all very well!" cried the aged peasant scornfully. "I'd like to see you manage them when they come and say good-day to you"

The other merely gave a savage look, and turned towards the South, where at that very moment fearful cries were arising, repeated again and again.

"Poor old, Marouké! They must be pulling out his teeth and his moustaches"

"Or pouring boiling water over his head."

"Or flogging him."

And each man of the group tried to guess what was going on down there in the distance, at that mysterious other end of the village. The cries of agony continued to ring out on the air. The hushed group of peasants looked at one another with an anxious question in their eyes, and the same feeling of panic seized upon them all. They were all struck with this threatening horror. In a flash, each one

thought of the terrible fate that might be lying in wait for him. They were aware suddenly of being defenceless, like fatherless children, and pity and tenderness awoke in them for one another in this hour of common suffering. They felt themselves all akin, all of the same family, and before the imminent danger hanging over their heads, instinctively drew closer together with mutual good-feeling and trustfulness.

"Well! Grigor's chickens were a dainty dish, it seems. There's an end of his good dinners!" chuckled the pock-marked peasant, when the cries had ceased.

"To be sure the *multesim*, the *tchavoosh*, and the *sapti's* were all well-stuffed. No doubt they wanted one thing after another. Poor Marouké made a wedding-feast; he killed two sheep; they had butter, wine, chickens, and all sorts of other dishes . . . It was a brigand's orgy, a regular festival. They called for the young girls of the house, the wife, too . . . and they kept it up till morning. . . . Next day, as you know, the neighbours found the old man tied to the trees, with one arm broken, and his sons were half dead with the blows they got in the night. . . . Afterwards the whole house was cleared, and what the *sapti's* could not take with them, or put up for sale, they spoilt and smashed in pieces. . . . And then all the property was put up to auction yesterday, as you know for yourselves. . . . And they were all begging, weeping, crying out . . . but it was useless."

"May their race rot, and their power be broken in hell!" the pock-marked peasant again cried aloud,

as he listened, like all the others, open-mouthed and horrified.

"And every year it's the same story—how many times a year? We shall never see the end of it—these horrors! O Almighty God, merciful and glorious God! how are we to escape from this hell?"

Cries of this sort fell from all lips when the peasant had finished his story. It was now nearly noon, and very soon a peasant appeared on the high road and made for the group in all haste.

"The *saphtés* are coming with the *gzir*" (the head man of the village), he whispered, and seemed half choked with apprehension. In the twinkling of an eye the group had dispersed.

In one of the tiny houses, awkwardly placed at the edge of the same road, an elderly woman was seated on a sofa. Her whole attitude betrayed weariness and suffering.

"This time it is all over with us. . . . What a blow! what a blow!" she moaned. "What can we give, or do, or say to them? O merciful God, I am old! Why hast Thou not shielded my age from these horrors?"

"He is gone, he wanders about in distant countries to gain a little money, he says. And look at us—his mother, his wife, these little ones—all left alone without support, without a master. We are in the clutches of these devils . . . the beasts will devour us," wailed a young woman, distraught, as she walked ceaselessly up and down between the four walls of the room.

Outside in the courtyard the children laughed and played.

"This is too much! We cannot live here without a man," the old woman cried indignantly.

"It is the *multezim* who brings ruin on us, it is the *multezim*," the other said passionately, speaking half to herself, and sinking on to the sofa, she began to drum nervously with her hands on her knees, not stopping her sobs and sighs, her frail body quivering.

The *multezim* is the bailiff in Turkey. He it is who gives permission to grind the grain, the mill-stones being in the keeping of a special officer called *shahna*. With the help of this latter, the *multezim* reckons the grain, and has the mills put under a seal, so that the peasants are prevented from touching them under pain of heavy penalties, until the day of the tax-gathering. The grain may remain under his seal for an indefinite time, and it is very often spoilt and goes mouldy. The *multezim* and the *shahna* have a custom, which has become a law, of fixing an arbitrary amount for each man to pay, and then, instead of the ordinary tithe being exacted, the peasant pays forty or fifty per cent. in addition. It is the same with garden and farm-stuff and with hay; they are ever seeking for money. The bankrupt Government gives free play to the arbitrary dealing of the *multezim*, as long as it recovers its own share from him. Detachments of *sapties* are placed under the bailiff's command, as he is the representative of the Government, and these *gendarmes* seek their own interests by unjust or arbitrary taxation, by pillage, or by extortion and other legalised methods of robbery. Their zeal in persecuting the people while imposing and gathering in the innumerable taxes, is

a chronic and dangerous scourge, recurring all through the year, disheartening and ruining the villagers.

"It is the *multezim*, the *multezim*," the young woman cried out again, beating her hands on her knees. He makes out that the corn is two or three times above the real weight. . . . What shall we do? What can we pay it with? Ah!" she sobbed, her eyes streaming, "what have I done to be punished like this? . . . and to-morrow I shall be wandering about the roads with the children, without bread. . . . Oh, my Ohan! what a life you left me to when you went away! Ah! he won't be back perhaps for five or six years or more!" she concluded, choking her sobs, her breast heaving in her distress.

Again there was a mournful silence. This was followed by a noise which came first from the road, and then from the courtyard. The mother and daughter stared at each other with a dumb, significant look. They seemed to be glued to their seats, and to be holding their breath. Outside the children, suddenly began to cry.

"Well, I say, is everybody dead here?" growled a thick voice behind the door, and the *multezim* entered, a man of about thirty, with a hard face. He was followed by five or six *zapties*, whose weapons clanked noisily as they gesticulated in a threatening manner. One of them, the *tchavoosh*, a tall and well-built man, advanced with a swaggering step and arrogant manner.

"Where the devil are you?" the *multezim* began angrily. The *tchavoosh* repeated the question with a low voice. The two voices came like a sudden blow on the women. They got hastily on their feet and

stood before the *multezim*, stammering something incoherent.

"Where's your husband?" asked the *tchavoosh* of the young woman in a gruff voice.

"In America," the young woman answered, fixing eyes like a timid gazelle's on the *tchavoosh*.

"I don't know anything about that . . . I can't go and look for him—can I?—you wretched creatures," the other began angrily. But the *multezim* interrupted him. He knew that America existed, having heard the name somewhere or other. He bent down and whispered a word in the ear of the *tchavoosh*. Upon the face of the latter appeared a cunning smile, and he leered at the young woman. She cast down her beautiful mournful eyes, and the blood rushed over her fair cheeks, and burned in two glowing patches. The *multezim* at last fixed the scale of the taxes on the grain, the beasts, the hay, and the fifteen sheep belonging to the household. During the counting up, the sum was doubled, increased, indeed, nearly five-fold, and the women's eyes opened wider and wider in astonishment. It was quite clear to them that the *multezim* counted five instead of one. It meant disaster and ruin. The young woman, speechless and overwhelmed, began to anticipate worse to follow. Her breast heaved violently, her heart beat, her hands and temples grew like ice, and a cold shudder of alarm passed through her. The other, the old woman, flew into a rage when she saw the insolent greed of the tax-collectors. She tried to protest:

"This account of yours is monstrous," and her face reddened with anger.

"Monstrous? how so? . . . And you steal the

grain at night. How much does that come to? Ah! you cheat the Government! is that nothing?"

"It's a lie—all of it!" cried the young woman indignantly. "You yourselves seized fields last night that belong to the village; yes, you have broken the seal on my grain, and your horses have eaten it . . . and your servants have stolen some too," she added, pausing for breath.

"'Pon my word, you speak like a singing nightingale, my dear," said the *tchavoosh* maliciously, and he caressed one of her cheeks with his hand.

"Let me be, let me be!" she cried, and she flung herself back as if she had been bitten, rubbing her cheek as though to get rid of something unclean. Her face grew scarlet, and then paled, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Let my daughter alone," cried the mother at the same moment, and, furious and trembling, she rushed between her daughter and the *tchavoosh*. He laughed a dry, ironical laugh.

"Look here, don't go wasting the time! Pay the taxes quickly and let us go!" insisted the *multezim*, whilst the old woman always tried to keep in front of her daughter and not let the men get near her.

"But, you wretches, I tell you I can't possibly pay such a sum. . . . Take it in kind . . . come back another day . . . say in two months' time. . . . Be merciful . . ." the old woman cried, indignant and suppliant too.

"Quick now! Let's have an end to this, you cursed creature! Bring out the money if you don't want the house to be stripped . . . do you understand?"

"Ah no, not that! . . . I fall at your feet . . . I

beg you, I pray you, don't insist on it. . . . I swear I cannot pay so much. . . . For over three years my son-in-law has been away from here; only four months ago I buried my only son . . . my brother has gone off to Erzeroom more than eight months ago, . . . he'll be back in a month. . . . Oh, leave us and come back again . . . you see we are without a man to manage . . . Oh, have pity on us! pity on my little children! . . . Mercy, I beg, mercy! . . . And falling on her knees, the old woman dragged herself along the ground, and crouched slavishly at the feet of the *multezim* and the *tchavoosh*, begging incessantly, lamenting and clutching at their legs, like an old and faithful servant, kissing the men's hands, now clinging to their uniforms, pitiful and despairing. The daughter sobbed bitterly, her face hidden in her hands.

"Enough, enough, you old wretch! . . . Here, take this old woman out of the way!" ordered the *multezim*, and several *saptis* fell upon her and dragged her along the ground towards the door.

"Bind her to a tree, and if she resists, knock her on the head," cried the *tchavoosh* on his own account.

These words confounded the young woman, who took her hands from her eyes, only to see her mother being dragged out like a sack. With a shrill cry she sprang towards her, and falling on her knees, took her in both arms.

"No, no! . . . What are you doing, scoundrels, impious brutes? . . . Mother, mother, stay here . . . you mustn't go . . . mustn't leave me here alone . . . mother. . . . Leave her, you beasts! she is going to die . . . she has fainted."

And in her rage and despair she embraced her mother's inert body tighter and tighter, kissing her cheeks, her hands, and her gown over and over again; tearing her own hair, sobbing convulsively, till, with strength failing and gasping for breath, she began to swoon away.

"Get up, get up, my beauty. . . . Get up, I say, you baggage!" cried the impatient *tchavoosh*, mingling insolence and cajolery, oaths and a string of insults.

But the young woman heard nothing. Still clutching her mother in her arms, she talked distractedly, repeating meaningless words, pouring out a stream of broken appeals, oaths, and blessings.

"Ah! I shall have to lift you up, then. I can't waste time over women!" and the *tchavoosh* took the girl brutally by her long hair, and tearing her from her mother's body, threw her to the ground. She uttered one deep, piercing cry, and lay still. Was her cry at the blow, or at being torn from her mother? The cry of a breaking heart, of a woman defenceless, with misery before her, death, dishonour? She lost consciousness. The old woman's body was dragged into the court, and in a few seconds the ruffians overran and ransacked the whole house in all directions: the chests, the cupboards, the beds were pulled to pieces; all the furniture and household goods were thrown about, and overturned, and in time the few rooms were as dishevelled as if a hurricane had passed through them.

"Mother, mother!" the cries of the children were heard as they rushed into the room, "Mother, mother! they have tied grandmother to a tree . . . they are beating her! they are beating her!" . . . and they

threw themselves upon their mother's senseless body. She sat up, and looked round the room with wild and haggard eyes. The sight of the confusion of the room and the unusual noise outside brought her to herself. She got up quickly and made a violent movement towards the door. But the terrified children clung to the folds of her gown, weeping and clamouring round her. For some moments she tried to free herself from her tender living prison. At last, losing patience, in her distraction, she flung one of the children to the floor, caught the other roughly by the arm, and pushing the third child away, disengaged herself, and rushed to the door.

"Where are you going?" cried a gruff voice in the passage, which seemed to fill all the air round her with threats. And she heard another voice, the *tchavoosh's*. He entered the room, flinging her back by the arm.

"Stay here indoors, my darling! . . . I won't hurt you. Your soft eyes have set my heart on fire," and, talking all the while meaningly, he forced horrible endearments on her, and tried to put his arm round her waist. She struggled violently.

"Stay here, I say, or I'll make you. I'll knock the life out of you"

"Kill me, kill me!" she cried, fighting desperately, against the *tchavoosh*, throwing herself violently on the ground in her efforts to tear away his iron embrace. The fight lasted a few minutes longer. The children, scared by the cries of the *tchavoosh*, rushed out.

"Stay here, my pretty one. It's no use to struggle."

"Leave me, leave me . . ." and bursting out into tears without power to speak again, she grew so weak that she felt she was going to faint again.

"Be quiet now. You won't be hurt. . . . I'll be your guest to-night, my pretty one . . ."

But the young woman had fainted. He put her on the sofa, and went out of the room, locking the door behind him. At the same moment heart-breaking cries arose from the old woman; blows rained on her head and her body.

"I tell you I will have the whole lot in money, not in goods, not a penny . . . you have hidden the gold pieces somewhere in the earth. . . . Look sharp, you hag, where are they? or we'll string you up on this tree . . ."

The *multezim's* threats were drowned by the old woman's cries.

In less than half an hour all the household goods were heaped up anyhow on the road: cattle, sheep, a horse, an ass, the few pieces of furniture, coffers and cooking utensils, and other domestic articles. Everything was put up to public auction, the taxes were taken in silver money.

In the nooks and corners of the house, the *zaptiés* finished up with thrusting in their pockets sundry little objects, valuables which they had found here and there. From time to time two of them seized on the same object, cursing and re-cursing one another as they continued their rummaging.

"I haven't done badly, eh? The fourth part of the gains comes to me; it was a bargain," whispered the *tchavoosh* in the ear of the *multezim*, mysteriously.

The latter, busied over his task as auctioneer, only nodded assent.

There was a large crowd in front of them of peasants from the villages near, and of usurers from all parts. The peasants crowded round the cattle and goods put up for sale. The crowd moved in waves, sometimes ebbing towards the edges of the human lake, and then flowing back to the centre again. Groups detached themselves everywhere, and joined on again. Prices were discussed, people hustled and shoved, talked and shouted. Here a group were examining the horse's teeth, the donkey's feet; there they collected round the oxen, a cow, and the few sheep. Sometimes a laugh could be heard, but what a laugh! Nervous, unpleasant, and without gaiety, it betrayed the secret uneasiness of the crowd. All faces had a weary, scared expression, a drawn look; the brows were wrinkled, the lips uneasy and twitching, the eyes wide open and astonished. One might have supposed they were witnessing the execution of capital punishment. A joke of some kind, furtively spoken, repeated in lugubrious tones, far from provoking laughter, stirred their hearts only with a doleful misgiving, with sorrowful oppression.

The crowd became thicker, and the shoving more general, when it came to the turn of the cattle and sheep to be put up to auction. A tall man with a hard face advanced, and pushed his way through the crowd. It was the village *gsir*. He approached the *multezim*, whose expression changed to a flattering one, as he stammered out his first words. He was closely followed by the village priest, squat and corpulent, with the flabby face of the easy-

going man, without conscience or character ; he had a flowing, grey moustache and beard and a highly complacent air. Both were closely watched by every one, not only on account of their high rank in the village, but also because most of the goods were generally purchased by them.

"The priest and the *gsir* coveting the shoes of a dead ass," the peasant with the small eyes remarked to his neighbour, ironically quoting a well-known proverb.

"They help those damned officials a lot ; they give them good advice ; they tell them which of us have most money. . . . ' *Their lines are fallen in pleasant places,*' and they do all they can to gain the good graces of the officials. Just look at them," he went on abruptly ; "he knows his business, he does," indicating, with a nod of his head, the *gsir* who had just succeeded in buying the sheep and cattle in one lot for a wretched price. At length the *multezim's* business drew to a conclusion.

The old woman's cries had ceased. Some time before, her cords had been untied, and she had been placed in the stable, where, stretched on the ground, she was delirious. The children had disappeared, perhaps they were hiding somewhere. The young woman all this time was shut in, and lay there, apparently lifeless. By degrees the crowd dispersed, but here and there a few groups lingered in the road.

"Where's the *tchavoosh* ?" asked the old peasant referred to before, who had been in one of the groups.

"Oh, the *tchavoosh* and the others are gone to that house over the road there, to pock-marked Guévo's."

"Ha, ha ! it's no matter, no matter ; he's all right,

he's the devil's own," chuckled the old man with an air of conviction, but also of slight disappointment, as if he were annoyed at the lost opportunity for new and harrowing scenes.

"Oh, of course, we all know he'll find a way to pay five-fold, if it is exacted, as others have done before him. It's ruin, of course, but at least it's one way of getting out of the claws of these beasts."

"It is all very well, when you can pay something by some means or another, but what if you can't?"

"Help! My God! help!"

The cries issued suddenly from one of the houses in the street, and the group was hushed and astonished.

"You are a revolutionary, a conspirator against the Government," cried the low voice of the *tchavoosh*.

The peasants exchanged looks of stupefaction and consternation, and seemed to be turned into stone, so quiet and cold did they suddenly become. Some faces were blanched with fear.

"What next? These brutes will come tearing down in a few minutes, shouting in the streets that we are revolutionaries, that they may rob us right and left."

This was the thought that flashed through every mind.

"You are a revolutionary, you've got a knife on you, you dirty infidel! You have accomplices in the village—who are they? There are revolutionaries in the village" and the voices—scolding, shouting, insulting—poured out a torrent of threats and oaths. It was the *multezim* and the *tchavoosh*.

"You are caught . . . you must pay another gold

piece (Turkish *livre*) for having this dagger in your house. Do you hear, you dog?"

The accused tried to defend himself, to protest. It was not a dagger at all. It was only a big knife. But every time he tried to speak, his voice was drowned in their uproar.

"What! a knife? You dare talk to me, you pock-marked dog! Do you know that if it were winter I'd strip and duck you in the ice. Then you'd see who Osman *tchavoosh* is!"

The deafening noise increased, and this time it came from the courtyard, where, tied to the trunk of a tree, Guévo, bruised with many blows, was screaming loudly:

"Oh, you brute, you assassins!"

The peasants recovered from their stupor, but mute, broken in spirit, and hardly daring to breathe, they melted away, with bowed heads. The road was now quiet and deserted. Only now and again the baying of dogs mingled with human cries.

The next day in the little ruined room the remains of a meal were strewn on the sofa. In one corner, seated on the ground, was the young woman, with pale, tortured face, her eyes inflamed, brooding in utter despair. Silence reigned, grave and heavy, only broken by her sighs, and by the heavy sobs that rose from her involuntarily in a half-suppressed spasm.

"I am lost, I shall die . . ." The cry broke from her with sorrow inexpressible, and wringing of hands. "Ah, Ohan, Ohan, why did you leave me?" and she beat her breast and tore her hair in anguish, raving

ceaselessly of killing herself, of putting an end to her shame.

"May your husband perish ; may he die there and never see his home again. He is the cause of our suffering . . . he is the cause of your ruin."

It was the old mother who spoke, huddled on the sofa, an inert mass, swollen with the blows that had been dealt her, and half-dead. She lifted up her heavy head ; her face was drawn with suffering, and as she tried to raise herself her strength failed her, and she fell back again. She uttered a cry, and tears flowed from her lustreless eyes. And silence fell again—a silence ominous with the chill of death.

PART II

CHAPTER I

IN THE SEAPORT TOWN

IT was the winter of 1890, in one of those Turkish coast towns on the Black Sea that climb up the hillsides in terraces, framed in luxuriant foliage. In one of the outlying quarters of the town, on either-side of the squalid little streets, stand modest-looking houses only one and two storeys high. One rather old house, with damp, grey walls, was huddled away between many others. From its own little corner it seemed to peep out timidly across the blue and infinite sea.

In a small room, furnished simply with an iron bedstead and a few chairs, a man was seated at a writing-table. He was finishing the reading of some letters. He was a small, thin man, with narrow chest and high shoulders. He had a shock of hair, rather a low, square brow, rugged and intelligent-looking. His thin, somewhat sunken cheeks were framed in a rather long beard and a full moustache. His fine, large brown eyes, clever and expressive, gave serenity to the grave, sickly, and melancholy face.

As he read, flashes of joy or sadness flitted over his face, whilst his long bony fingers nervously fluttered the leaves. With him was Sako, who followed with intent eyes every movement of his host. And no wonder, for he was no other than M. Thoros, a man renowned throughout Armenia, whose name was a household word in every town and village of the country.

How simple he was! So much activity, so much force in that frail body! At that moment, as he read, a glow of anger had kindled on his face, lending to it a singular vigour. But almost immediately the look of anger was succeeded by a good-natured, though somewhat enigmatical smile. Somehow this smile made Sako feel at home with the man he was visiting for the first time. He felt, indeed, as though he were an old friend, as though he had been with him at Akn, at Arabkir, as though they had travelled together. He no longer felt nervous in the presence of this famous man. He longed to open his heart to him, to tell him all his hopes, his doubts, his fears for the Cause.

Thoros finished his reading, and looked towards his visitor. The light in his eyes gave enthusiasm to the pale face. Its effect on Sako was magnetic. "If he should tell me to do anything, ever so risky, at the cost of my life I'd do it," he thought.

"What have you heard and seen on your travels?" demanded Thoros.

"Nothing! Things are going from 'bad to worse,'" was Sako's answer.

A short silence followed.

"Do you think, then, that the country will be

ruined?" said Thoros, adding: "One hears that many of our people have left their homes this year and emigrated."

"Like sheep, one after another! More have gone this year than ever; and next year still more will go. There's nothing else to be done—nothing," replied Sako brusquely.

Thoros, thoughtful and silent, rolled a cigarette with nervous fingers. Sako, moved by an irresistible desire to reveal the cruel terror that had haunted him for months past, said shortly: "The people are destroying themselves. I don't know how we can face the danger."

Having spoken, his nervousness and grief grew strong again. He gazed fixedly at Thoros, waiting an answer. Thoros understood, and replied by an illustration.

"Supposing you saw a man drowning, wouldn't you do your best to save him, even if you risked your own life by doing so?"

Sako's eyes shone. Here then was the thought that should urge him forward despite all dangers. Thoros continued to speak. As he spoke Sako realised more and more the inevitable necessity for an almost hopeless struggle. Thoros spoke well, and, because he was convinced himself, soon convinced his hearer.

It was almost dusk when Sako left the house. The sky was hidden under coppery clouds. A biting wind blew from the North, bringing the first cold of winter. The last dry leaves fell from the trees, and were swirling in heaps over the ground. Now and again the boom of big angry

waves could be heard in the distance beating upon the shore. Sako wandered about as though in a dream, with the murmur of the sea in his ears. The words of Thoros echoed in his brain continually, like the beating of the surf. He was haunted by that grave and sympathetic face. And Sako vividly recalled his voice and his simple manner of speech. He felt himself under the spell of this strong, sincere man. He felt cheered and strengthened since he had seen Thoros. Life meant something different now, and he was ready to sacrifice himself for the new faith that had been implanted in his soul. It seemed to him that all his past had been like a dark path in the underwoods, a path which had suddenly vanished for ever, leaving him on a mountain height, where infinite space opened up around him an immense horizon.

Suddenly, noises vague and sustained, mingling with the roar of the sea, smote upon his ear. He walked towards the harbour. At each step the clamour became more and more distinct, and soon he could hear human cries, rhythmic and monotonous. When the harbour came in sight, bathed in twilight, he saw a number of rowing boats and ships rocking on the waves.

Far away the swelling sea, an ever-moving desert, howling and foaming, was lost in the mistiness and twilight. All at once, the heavy, long-drawn bass notes of a signal rent the air with sinister sound. It told of the departure of one of several big ships in the offing, which had already weighed anchor. A column of thick black smoke was pouring out of both the funnels. There was a stir on the bridge, a hurry and

bustle, whilst the decks still trembled with the last vibrations of the steam-whistle. From all sides little boats with passengers glided over the waves in haste to reach the outgoing vessel.

Sako followed with his eye some of the small boats gliding towards the vessel, and he thought he could distinguish men mounting the ladders. The monster had swallowed them up. Who knows? Perhaps they were Armenians leaving their native land in despair. It made his heart ache. Again the whistle sounded. A little time, and the monster had gone.

A feeling of solitude crept over Sako, just as if he had taken leave of some one dear to him. But his musings were cut short by the same rhythmical cries he had heard before. Mechanically he turned his steps towards the docks.

Here small scattered groups of loafers stood about, several *zapti's*, all gazing at some dozens of men, who with heavy loads on their backs were hurrying, one after the other in a line, towards a large sailing-vessel. One group was coming from the docks, whilst another was going, working feverishly, panting under their heavy burdens, and bathed in sweat. They uttered the rhythmical cries, as though to encourage one another and hasten the work. Their voices rose and fell, and were lost in the sound of the waters. From time to time a harsh voice urged on the labourers, swearing at them in Turkish. Sako was not surprised to see that all of them were dressed as Armenian peasants of the provinces of Moosh and of Van. At all times and places these poor emigrants coming from distant provinces, tramping on foot for a week at a time, seek and implore for work, toiling at the hardest,

roughest labours, and for such a wage! Sako's thoughts were bitter. He studied the grey faces, bloodshot eyes, and thin cheeks, the bowed heads on the broad shoulders, and muscular, bony figures. And what a pitiful sum they gained for their half-famished families—hardly a crust of bread to keep body and soul together.

"Poor fellows!" muttered Sako sadly.

At that moment an elderly man happened to be standing by him, a Turk, yawning lazily. At Sako's words he turned and grumbled contemptuously.

"Fate has written it on their foreheads; those *raïas* are made to do that kind of work; it's all they're good for," and he laughed a dry, unpleasant laugh, as he continued to watch the labourers.

Sako was silent. Involuntarily he reflected upon the Turk's words. Was it not true that the mass of the Armenian people had the same idea about themselves? And perhaps it was this very idea that paralysed their energies and hopes, their faith in their own force, in their own will. Yes, the Armenian was a hard-working man, but was that the cause of his slavery? Sako was bitterly aware that perhaps this feeling weighed on the Armenian spirit.

"It's all they are good for"—the words continually haunted his brain, and he remained rooted to the spot, seeing nothing and hearing nothing except the confused noise that filled the air. And when at last a sudden gust of wind roused him, he saw that the work had ceased, and that almost every one had gone, and yet still he did not move.

It was now dusk. A few lanterns were alight, and swayed with the masts of the ships, like dim stars

against the black sky. The boats at anchor kept dancing on the swelling sea. On the deck of one of the ships under the pale light of a hanging lantern a few figures moved to and fro. Sako recognised them. They were some of the Armenian labourers who had finished their day's work. One was handling the ropes, another was wiping the sweat from his brow, one was fastening the strings of his sandals, whilst another shook the dust from his garments. Sako stood a few moments pondering over their lot. But the wind swooped down again with terrible force; angry booming waves rolled towards the shore, the masts swayed and shivered, the boats, little and big, hammered against one another in confusion. The storm was coming, tearing the bosom of the sea, shrieking and clattering over the shrinking roofs with a menace of disaster.

Sako turned slowly towards the town. He passed a group of Mohammedans quarrelling. A little further on his attention was attracted by the cries of an urchin, who was being cuffed and sworn at by an old man in a grocer's shop. Then he heard a lewd joke in Turkish tossed recklessly upon the night air, provoking ribald laughter from some loafers. As he mounted the hill a fruit-seller cried shrilly in Sako's ear, praising his wares. Sako went on and on. Groups of strollers passed him from time to time, talking, discussing, gesticulating, exclaiming, and the voices rose and fell and died away again in the distance. Sometimes a waggon passed him, drawn by oxen and buffaloes, that stumbled awkwardly along the stony road. Lights twinkled everywhere in the houses and in the shops now being noisily closed.

Sako turned down one of the dirty little streets where the wind was howling and raging, resounding between the two rows of houses as it rushed away towards the mountains. At this moment some Armenian words fell upon his ear, and three men, with bent backs and hurried but weary steps, passed silently by him. Perhaps it was the labourers that he had seen a short time before on board the ship. Mechanically he stopped, and his eyes followed them till the shadows shut them out from his view.

"It's all they are good for"—he remembered the words. "Who knows?" he murmured, pensive and mournful

CHAPTER II

AMONG THE WORKERS

ALL the evening the wind had raged unceasingly in tremendous gusts, beating upon the roofs and windows of the houses, drowning the roar of the swollen, foaming sea. It was nine o'clock at night and pitch dark. A man, short of stature, was walking quickly along a narrow road, which ascended the mountain. Sometimes, without stopping, he cast a watchful glance behind him, or tried with searching looks to penetrate the darkness in front.

He walked on and on, and turned the corner of a road, where three men could hardly pass side by side. Now he was skirting some low, half-ruined walls, behind which some one-storied houses were huddled, old, grey, miserable. They were silent and lifeless, as if uninhabited. At last the man stopped before a large closed door, both ancient and clumsy-looking, and whistled twice. A few minutes later the door opened, and the man silently entered a little square court, passed under something resembling a rustic verandah, and as he approached another high door, it was opened from behind, and he passed in. Here he found himself in a large stable, now disused, though

the mangers were still there. On the ground beneath them a number of big bundles were ranged. There were beds, rolled up in worn mats, for human beings now dwelt in the building formerly occupied by beasts. Two lanterns lit up the gloom, though the corners and high walls were lost in darkness. By their feeble glow he saw a group of some thirty persons, old and young and middle-aged. He saw brown faces, worn with toil, some prematurely wrinkled, all thoughtful, and with lively, expressive eyes. They were seated on the ground, making a circle round a *mangal*, a kind of chafing-dish, in which morsels of glowing charcoal spread some warmth. From time to time two huge, nervous hands, the fingers numb with cold, were stretched towards the fire. Those hands told a story of martyrdom.

Some of the men were smoking cigarettes in long holders. These they would light at the fire, and then puff heavy clouds of smoke from their mouths. There were men there in the costume of Moosh and of Van, others in that of the *zipka*. A few wore ill-fitting European costumes, tight at the sleeve, and baggy at the shoulder.

Sako was among them, pensive but observant, for he had just recognised some of the dock-labourers whom he had seen some hours before. They were talking about their work, their misery, their families.

At times the conversation was general, then the speakers would form into separate groups. Often there were pauses of absolute silence, only broken by an exclamation, an involuntary sigh, or a hoarse cough. All were quiet and thoughtful. After a

while one of the men said that the *polissaji* had arrived in the town. The mention of the man who played the part of post, and arranged the sending of money from the emigrants to their families, raised a general laugh and some exclamations

"May he go down to the devil below seven mountains and seven seas, and get his limbs broken so that he may never return," one man about forty swore in an angry tone. He was dressed in the Mooshiste costume, and had broad shoulders and an energetic countenance, in the middle of which a great nose bulged out, a little bent towards the left side. Two shining, quick eyes lit up the dark face beneath the thick black brows

"Amen, bravo, Hako!" said a voice.

"Curse him!—The brigand!—The thief!" cried other voices.

Hako, furious, looked right and left with an air of triumph, and began noisily to smoke a cigarette.

"That villain plunders us all," he continued, allowing a mouthful of smoke to escape in a cloud. "We gain a little money with difficulty, we want to send it to our families, and in the hands of these people we become slaves. He comes, he says, 'I will send it,' and then he demands interest, he demands the expenses of sending it, and then he pockets almost half of the sum. The devil! We don't even know if the other half will be deposited with our families. He comes back, he says to Simon *agha*, to Tigran *agha*, to this one and the other, that they owe so much, that he has paid so much on their account. What a dog! The family, the wife, the children are dying of hunger, are crushed beneath the taxes, and this

rascal says, 'I have paid the money to your creditors. . . . The debts!' he exclaimed after a pause, "What debts? They give us so much, and after a year they demand fifty-fold, a hundred-fold more. Is that a debt? And then we have not even a single morsel of paper, where it is written that he has paid debts on account to Tigran *agha*. They work in the dark, these fellows. He comes to me and says, 'I am the witness.' He's a nice witness, he is! Debts!" he repeated, becoming more and more furious. "How often has he not told me that he has paid my money to my creditors, but that cursed debt always mounts up and never gets less—never!"

Hako ceased speaking, and his eyes flashed with suppressed rage, as he tapped his cigarette-holder smartly with his finger, to make the cigarette ashes fall. And as he put it between his lips again to breathe in the smoke, he noticed that the cigarette had fallen on the ground and that he only retained the holder. He spat angrily on the cigarette, as if for revenge, and growled out: "I'd like to spit upon the *polissaji* in the same way," and with a hasty gesture he plunged the cigar-holder in the folds of his sash, a long, wide band of dark red stuff wound several times round the waist.

Hako loved to talk, and his long monologue created no surprise. All faces, on the contrary, showed attention and sympathy for him. Hako was loved by all his work-fellows for his courage and audacity. He had a great influence over them.

"But what would you have us do? We only have people like him to send the money," said one of the company sadly.

"There is no one else, it is true. The official post is much worse. With them the money goes every way except ours. There is nothing left but the *polissajis*," said another in resigned tones.

"Ah, it is impossible——"

"The brutes!"

"They side with the *aghas*, with the rich, so that they can ruin us more easily."

"But it is these very *aghas* who keep these sort of people as employés. They are the dogs that find the quarry! They are the monopolists, the usurers! The devil take them all!" Hako finished by exclaiming.

All were silent. From different parts the cigarettes glimmered oftener and clearer. Several men shifted their position. Some one grumbled beneath his breath. A man from Van took off his *araktchi*, a sort of cap sewn in silk of different colours, passed his hand over his short bristling hair, and then scratched his neck with one hand with a desolate expression.

Sako listened in silence, and this protest, inarticulate as it was, yet showing an awakened consciousness, he was pleased to note. "*It is all they are good for*"—he remembered the words, and all at once he felt comforted. No, they were good for something else. However, his thoughts were interrupted.

"It was a good harvest last year," some one said.

"Yes, as it always is. Our land is not ungrateful," said another.

"But yet, however good it is, what do we gain by it? We don't succeed in keeping for ourselves even what is barely necessary for our families. Don't we starve every year?"

"What is the good of sowing more than is necessary

for our families? And, let me tell you this, I would far rather not touch the land at all. -It brings nothing, and then it's an eternal trouble—it's like a weight hanging over you."

And, before he had ceased speaking, suddenly, in a moment's silence, two whistles were heard.

"M. Thoros! M. Thoros!" exclaimed several voices.

Some minutes after, Thoros entered; all rose to their feet

"Good evening, my friends," was his simple greeting

"Happy to see you, happy to see you!" was the general reply.

Thoros approached the fire, warmed his hands, and took a place on a rug expressly prepared for him. He was no sooner seated, when the customary greeting, "Happy to see you!" rose once more from all sides.

"Well, how are things going, my friends?" Thoros asked graciously, with radiant face. And amidst the murmured thanks he began to look round for some one.

"You see your new brothers," he exclaimed with a smile, as soon as he could discern Sako, who was seated almost in the dark. And he added in a tone of good comradeship, whilst his eyes shone. "You see, Sako, the man who is sitting just opposite me," and he pointed with his finger to Hako. "He is a wrong-headed fellow."

There was a laugh. "It is because I am right," replied Hako, smiling.

"Every one is afraid of him, and once he even beat a *saptié* in the night when it was dark," continued

Thoros in the same tone. "And ask him why—it was not for the smallest reason, but simply because it was a *saptié*, and because he was Hako. He beat him for pure pleasure."

"If I had had the strength I'd have beaten them all," said Hako seriously, although he smiled.

"And this other man," continued Thoros pleasantly, "this young man seated beside Hako, under Hako's eye, he comes from the same village as Hako. He is not yet eighteen, but has a wife already, and a child whom he himself has not yet seen. His father, who arranged the marriage, said to him three months afterwards: 'Karo, you must be off to another country to gain a little money; your place here will not remain empty, nor your work undone. Your wife will replace you.' And Karo went."

Whilst Thoros was speaking, always in the same kindly tone, Karo grew red and confused, and never ceased to regard Thoros with a gentle, melancholy air. There was some curiosity in his look, as if he had only at that moment comprehended the real motive of his marriage. However, Thoros had spoken of it before now, and every time it was with an inexpressible pleasure, with a sweet sadness, that he heard him speak on the subject. Each time a vision rose before his eyes of the village on the immense green, rich plain of Moosh, his father's homestead, the stable to which each evening they drove the cattle from the beautiful meadows. He saw their only horse, that he so loved to tend; the little river, which flowed merrily near the house. And finally, the figure rose before him of Antaram, his wife, a child of fifteen, always active, gay, and

hard-working, with a smiling face and shining eyes, whom he had begun to love long after the marriage, when he was already far from his village, as he listened to the words of Thoros, who counselled him to return to his father's homestead.

"Let him stay here," said Hako on these occasions, for he was the young man's uncle. "Let him stay here; we mustn't turn him into a woman, he must become the soldier of his country."

"But he is young," protested Thoros, "let him enjoy his life a little in his youth."

"He will find his pleasure in helping us," replied Hako unmoved; "he is an intelligent lad, he can keep a secret, and when we come here I always bring him to listen to you. He ought to see the world, hear what other people have to say, and see both the suffering and happiness of others."

As Thoros silently rolled a cigarette, Hako said in joking tones: "M Thoros, our new friend ought to know Pétó too," and he fixed a laughing eye on a man of middle height, very corpulent, with a thick neck, a defiant, nervous face, and bold eyes.

"Him?" and Thoros smilingly tapped Pétó on the shoulder, for he was seated beside him. "He is a very different fellow. They call him Pétó the Madman, because he is so foolishly impatient and audacious. His village is one of the finest on the plain of Moosh. There is not a single man in this village at this moment; they have all gone, some to Russia, others to Constantinople, others to Greece or Egypt. Only the women, the old men, and the children are left there. The women, like the village, and like all Nature there, are beautiful, and they are the prey of the Kurds, and this is the

question: Can the village and the families remain without men? Can the sowing and the labouring, the gardens and the cattle, be left without men?"

Thoros regarded Péto as he put these questions. The latter did not speak as a rule, but only when he thought it necessary, remaining immovable with his head a little on one side. Something like a smile appeared on his lips, whilst his rather protruding brown eyes retained a forbidding, almost sulky expression.

"That does not concern the man—the wife, and the children," said he, in a disdainful tone, and with a melancholy air. "And then nothing exists for us any more in the village. What should I do with a wife and a family? A family is not for me," he exclaimed bitterly. "And besides—besides——" he added awkwardly—"besides, my wife has been carried off by the Kurds, and her sister too——"

Having told his misfortune for the first time, his low voice trembled a little, and his face darkened. A silence weighed them all down. Outside the wind groaned, howled, and beat upon the closed door of the stable.

"Yes, certainly your case is bad, very bad," said Thoros, after a long silence, and his eyes, so often veiled by a sad expression, were now shining and serious. "But what would you have? The remedy for this state of things lies with yourselves. You alone, by your own efforts, can save yourselves. Your country and your toil will be your own possession as soon as your hopes are founded on yourselves, on your own efforts. It is true you are plundered on all sides by monopolists, by money-lenders,

by the big landowners ; but your greatest and most direct enemy at this moment is the Turkish Government. I say the Turkish Government," said Thoros emphatically, "and not the Turkish people or the Kurds. The Turkish people are unhappy and miserable too, but they are barbarians, ignorant and fanatical, and the Government makes use of these qualities to excite them against you. The Kurds, too, are only brigands who have a passion for liberty. A good Government could soon prevent them robbing and murdering. But there again the Government uses these qualities as a weapon against us Armenians, so that we may not be able to raise ourselves materially, morally, and as a nation."

All listened attentively. Several times they questioned him on this or that point, and Thoros, in the simple and often imaginative language of the people, explained, with many illustrations. At length, pressed by the questions of people eager really to know and understand their own position, and anxious to follow the way of redemption, Thoros explained the situation in a clear, intelligent style.

Theirs had been a long series of martyrdoms during ages of slavery under a foreign yoke—a terrible never-ending series. Tracked like wild beasts, abandoned, persecuted, the Armenian peasant, who forms the eightieth part of his nation, has been, and is, a martyr. One cause of martyrdom is his affection for his plot of land. He is at once its slave and its lover, bound to it by ties of life and death. He cannot exist away from the soil, and it is this very land that starves and ruins his life. For this plot of land, and upon it, he suffers, desiring it and cherishing it.

With his bloody sweat he fertilises the fields, wins from it those fruits that are taken from him, and after each harvest the peasant once more becomes the slave of that inanimate earth which imposes upon him again endless, blind, and merciless sufferings. And, after all, is he really the master of this very land—of his little plot of soil? Tax follows upon tax, indefinite, heavy, direct and indirect, upon everything, upon what he has and what he has not, upon what he is going to have, taxes upon everything and everybody, taxes that finally strangle him and bring definite ruin upon him. There are always taxes, and in addition there is the tithe on the land. Produce is taxed, each article mulcted in five, six, or seven different ways, through the sowing, the growth and the various changes incidental to the harvest. Then there are taxes on the cattle, and on the produce and materials necessary for their use. Taxes on fuel, on all sorts of vegetables and foods. A military tax upon every man up to the age of sixty from the moment when the infant appears in the world with its first cry. All existing roads are taxed, as well as those but half made or not made at all except on paper. Tax, tax, tax, at every step, on every occasion, every day, and everywhere the whole year round! Taxes are due to the State, and in many districts to the *beys*. Taxes are due to the convents. There are innumerable taxes, without reason or measure. There is not enough money in the whole country to pay them. Nevertheless, ready money is exacted. You must pay, and pay, and if it is absolutely impossible for you to pay, you are dishonoured, beaten, tortured, ruined. It is war, and

nothing else ; a war in which the conquerors exercise, pitiless and unimpeded, all their cupidity, all their brutality and brigandage. They tear the skin from the flesh, and the flesh from the bones ; they throw the bones to the dogs, and still their cry is, " Pay, go on paying ! " Fines, *bakshish*, to great and small, to the *pashas*, or *bey*s, to the *mudirs*, to the *saptis*, who extort on their own account, and devour one another, and, like leeches, drive their sting into the people's veins and suck till they have sucked all the blood. And then there are the usurer, and the Convent, that pursue the peasant like black shadows, the one always forcing him into debt, the other carrying off, as Convent-tax, his last measure of corn. . . . It is all a tangle of insoluble misfortunes. There are no roads for communication, there is no safety for the worker, there is no profit, no trade, no commerce, no money . . . it is all like a stagnant marsh, utterly lost and dead. Then there is danger to honour and to life ; there is murder done under authority, murder becomes a flourishing and lawful trade. Then there are the incessant aggressions of the Kurds and other hordes of barbarians, who descend like a hurricane, make inroads like savage beasts, ravage, plunder, burn the villages, and spill blood, laying waste the fields like locusts, and are off again, gay and triumphant, leaving behind them consternation, ruin, death. Owing to all this there is widespread famine—the famine of forty years ago, the famine of twenty years past, the famine of ten years before, the famine of yesterday, the famine of to-day, always running its unstemmed and deadly course, falling periodically upon the whole country. There

are thousands of human corpses lying on the fields, on the hills, in the gardens, and in the cottages. And the diseases inseparable from this scourge spread abroad. This accumulation of horrors plunges the country into black mourning and misery, whence issue only laments and sobs, lugubrious keenings, unechoed, that die away, and are lost in infinite, unhearing space

As Thoros finished, his voice thrilled and grew loud and then suddenly hushed, whilst with his last words it trembled strangely.

All hearkened with white faces, open-mouthed, hardly daring to breathe, their wide eyes fixed upon Thoros, terrified before the picture of their own distress and misery, unable to break the silence that seemed to crush them all under its weight in the gloomy place that was like a great coffin.

"Yes, that's how it is; it's quite true," said Hako, breaking the silence at last, and he added with emotion: "but what can we do? Hundreds of years have passed and we have always bent our necks . . . They seize everything out of our hands, everything . . . and we have always obeyed. . . . Are we to obey to-day also?"

And with this Hako became furious. Silence fell again. Every one exchanged looks mutely, as if they fain would speak, as if they were saying something that had a great significance for them. . . . But Hako impatiently cast his eyes around him, rose suddenly from his place, and said in grave, decided tones, addressing Thoros:

"M. Thoros, there is life, and there is death; but death is better than this life of ours. . . . We

want to fight. . . . We don't want to remain in this state of misery, year in, year out. . . . We will buy weapons for ourselves, and you shall send us where you will ; we wish to be soldiers of the revolution. . . . We wish to be *aspataks*."

As suddenly he ceased speaking, and without awaiting a reply from Thoros, he began to pace the room hastily, his hand in his trousers' pockets, with the air of a man who has just made his great decision.

No one showed any surprise at Hako's words. It seemed as if they were but the natural answer to the enigma, which was solved at last. Everybody felt suddenly released from the sense of a heavy weight. After a few moments of indecision, suddenly a great animation came upon them. They were all devoured by a longing to speak, discuss, smile, or laugh, to feel that they were alive—really alive, possessing will, sentiments, thoughts, and words. They surrounded Thoros, and questioned him, full of love and veneration for him, whom they were accustomed to call "Father." They showed no astonishment when he said that they must consider well the decision they had aimed at, which enrolled them as *aspataks*. They would be obliged to be always in the mountains, under arms, always pursued, tracked, often suffering cold and privation, and continually fighting against the Kurds, against the Turkish army, in defence of the villages. And worse than all, they would have to quit their families and their firesides, never perhaps to see them again. . . .

But the workers were resolved to follow the path prescribed. They took upon themselves all the toil,

they would endure all the miseries, all the wounds, if only they were fighting. The intoxication was general. An impetuous, obstinate, undaunted desire urged them on towards the distance, towards the unknown, which was as yet so clear; in their fancy it was not a blind, indefinite, uncalculating impulse; nor was it the result of a thought, a conviction, cold, but decisive, watchful, but full of hope. No, what urged them on was the anguish of profound suffering, the feeling of being abandoned in a situation without issue. Theirs was the bitter consciousness that their own life was no longer worth anything in the world's eyes. It was necessary for them that it should acquire value in their own. What urged them on was the overflow of their distress, the accumulated rage at consuming griefs, the cry of work ruined, of sweat without harvest, of the eternal disaster caused by this very sweat, flowing without ceasing, an inexhaustible rain full of blood and pregnant with revolt. And all these irresistible, powerful feelings thrust them and dragged them towards the mountains and fields for the battle, giving them an impulse full of menace, of despair, of fury. They breathed out devastation, passion carried them away. Oh that the country might shake beneath their feet, that the enemy might tremble before the terror of their voices! Oh that the shocks of their rage and vengeance might be felt all around, without limit or obstacle, razing to the earth and demolishing all that came beneath the axe of their wrath! And after bowing down so long with patience, the slaves transformed into wild beasts, or into heroes, were rent with the desire to drown their sorrow in a torrent

of blood, and standing on the deserted ruins, triumphant and invincible, to cry curses upon a blind and lying destiny! Nay, by inconceivable force, they might transform this destiny, turn aside its chariot towards happiness, and let it roll on freely, ever towards the horizon, towards the unknown future, where in radiant rainbow colours shines the dream of Freedom.

CHAPTER III

IN THE NIGHT

IT was very late when Thoros came home. "Good-evening, mother," was his greeting to an old woman of about sixty, who, roused by the creaking of the door, appeared, holding a candle in her hand ; "you are not asleep?"

"Ah, Thoros, my son!" exclaimed the old woman, in a weary voice, "how late you are! I had the palpitations; I was shaking all over."

"But why, mother?"

"How can you ask why? We have become the slaves of these Mussulmans, and whenever you or my son Garéguin are out, I am afraid of going crazy. I am tortured all the time with the thought of some harm coming to you two, and then——" she was too excited to finish her sentence, but Thoros had understood. It was the eternal fear of the arrest of Garéguin, or of Thoros, who was his friend, and loved like a second son by the old lady. This fear also prevented the good soul from sleeping, and long nights through she sat up in bed, sad, despairing, and tearful, continually setting her nightcap straight with her shaking hand. Her heart beat so violently

as almost to stifle her, when she thought of her one hope, her only son, "the apple of her eye," who would not, perhaps, one day escape the danger.

"It would kill me! I should go mad! My soul would leave my body! My heart is almost broken at the mere thought, my dear Thoros," the old woman would moan, when she sometimes related her nocturnal sufferings. "What would become of me afterwards? Where could I drown myself, where bury myself, if my only son were to be arrested? At what door could I knock? To whom could I go for help? Ah, Thoros, I should die! I should go mad, mad!" And her brown eyes, still beautiful, though somewhat dimmed, would fill with tears, the long nose would wrinkle up, and the lips begin to tremble, whilst with a nervous movement she adjusted her cap, and pulled it down on her forehead.

"But why do you cry, Anahit *hanoom*? Why do you think about his being arrested?" Thoros would say, with an attempt at consolation, though he felt himself all the time how useless it was, seeing that the old woman's fears might become a reality at any moment. But when Anahit *hanoom* bemoaned herself he always felt unhappy. It seemed to him that her motherly grief might be construed into a reproach against his doings, owing to which Garéguin had become a fighting revolutionary. However, there was no foundation for his fears, and, as a rule, though always after some hesitation, he finished up by saying things to Anahit *hanoom* which were far from being consoling.

"But what can we do, mother? It is our fate—Garéguin's and mine. In the long run one's

conscience always makes one do something or other."

"It was an evil day when this misery came upon us!" And she would add in a resigned tone: "God bless you, my children! It is my fate too. But then I am a mother, and so I can do nothing but weep, and weep." And fresh tears would rise to her eyes, whilst once more, with a nervous movement, she adjusted her cap, and her voice would quiver with a note of heavy grief, unconsolated, unchanging.

This evening the watching had visibly tired her. Her face was flushed, and she did not move from the spot.

"Garéguin is in bed, I hope, and here am I in safety, so you can be easy, can't you, mother?" said Thoros gaily, as he took off his overcoat.

Anahit *hanoom* had scarcely opened her mouth to reply, when a hasty step was heard on the stair, and a young man descended. He was about the same age as Thoros, over thirty, tall and handsome, with a quantity of dark hair, beautiful, smiling black eyes, a slight moustache, and short, pointed beard.

"Oh, here you are at last! It's an awful night, very bad to be out in. . . . But how late you are, my friend," said the new-comer quickly, patting Thoros on the back with the air of a good comrade.

"Oh, how glad I am to have found a man like Hako! He will make many others listen to him," exclaimed Garéguin shortly after, in the room of Thoros, when the latter had just related in a few words what had taken place at the meeting. And in a gay, lively, pleasant fashion, he spoke of his

hopes, his great ideas, and what he expected of the people, having absolute faith in them, finding them so intelligent, so impressionable, so alive.

"Our people is a soil ready to receive the good seed, and how good it is to be the sower!"

Thoros listened to him in silence. It was a real delight to him. He saw in his friend's nature a freshness of feeling, a purity of hope, still untouched by failure, a conscience fortified with the belief that his efforts were fruitful. This conscience had made of Garéguin "a spoilt child." It had given him his faith in himself and his attractive young pride. And this pride often blossomed into a rapture full of youthfulness, and was sometimes transformed into a fascinating simplicity, a warm and lively enthusiasm.

These qualities had a quite peculiar charm, almost like that of a spring morning, unfolding its beauties in the delicate, early sunshine. He loved the Cause as the swallow loves such a morning. He loved the Cause as he might have loved a young girl who was scarce a woman; whose every movement and every tone, sometimes shy, sometimes *naïve*, sometimes arch and gleeful, conceal a mysterious charm, and hold, unconsciously, the promise of enchanting surprises, of a love that is like a long and wonderful dream with no awaking. And Garéguin became vexed and troubled, mistrustful and intolerant, when it seemed to him that in this or in that case the Cause had been served badly, that it had been treated more like a servant than a sovereign. And at such times, being much tormented himself, he was filled with a kind of rage and jealousy for the Cause, just as he might have been, if, even for a moment, some one

had tried to steal the magic looks of his well-beloved. But such moments were of short duration. His bright and eager nature soared above them, and when he quickly found, or thought he found, some satisfactory explanation, or the means to repair the mischief he had deplored, his handsome face grew calm and radiant again; and joyfully and highly, if always a little boisterously, he took up his task again for his continual thought was of the Cause, and he was like a lover entirely possessed by her who is his only faith and his whole creed

"Tell me what I am to do, and how I am to do it; be my guide, hold the reins in your strong hands, and I will go where you will, be the end what it may, so that I serve the Cause . . . Help me to understand; make me see my duty clearly, and leave the doing of it to me. And then you may be quite sure I shall make no false step. No one else shall meddle with what concerns me alone, no one shall have the right or the power to snatch my happiness from me." So Garéguin would sometimes speak to his friend. To-night, in answer to some remark of Thoros, he repeated it, but the other, contrary to his usual habit on such occasions, remained silent. Garéguin was struck by his companion's pensive air, and his voice, when he spoke, was full of gentle friendliness.

"You are sad, Thoros!"

"Sad? Oh no! But uneasy, and for a good reason. It seems that I am shadowed by the police. Some one was following me to-night the whole time. I had to use all my cunning to avoid him, and I made a great round before I could get to the house."

"He did not pitch upon our house?"

"I don't think so, otherwise all my cunning was in vain."

"Well, this begins to be amusing, eh?" exclaimed Garéguin, jumping up from his chair and pacing the room.

"We must find some way of getting 'out of this danger," said Thoros, with his pensive air. "We shall manage it all right if it is only the police who are on my track . . . and perhaps on your's, too. . . . You must be very careful"

"But, of course, it is only the police who are tracking us?"

"I don't know—possibly; but there are plenty of a dubious sort of folk about, with consciences all too elastic, and one or more of these may have succeeded in entering our ranks. If so, the matter has become serious"

"What?" cried Garéguin, as if he could not admit such a supposition. "Surely it is impossible that such vipers should have found a way to worm themselves into our hearts. We have only just begun to organise, and the first principle has been, as you know, to admit only good men and true, so that the Cause may be kept pure, so that we may all be 'of the elect.'"

"All the same, my friend, such people do somehow escape our foresight, and elude our precautions, and creep in among us."

"Do you think, then, that a few scattered adventurers, parasites, men without faith or honour, cowards or imbeciles, can ever imperil the purity, the sanctity of our Cause?"

"Yes, and its success and triumph," replied Thoros.

Then, rising quickly from his chair, he said in a pre-occupied tone : "But let us two get to work, my friend. I have papers here that must be destroyed, and others that must be put into safe keeping."

"Then, Thoros, you seriously expect the police to come here and make a search?"

"Yes, and you, too, must destroy at once any compromising papers that you may have. . . . And," he added, as he opened a drawer, "in any case, I must leave this house early to-morrow morning, for I am sure the police mean to have me at all costs."

Garéguin was horrified.

"What! you will leave our house where you have lived for more than a year? Oh, it's impossible! Thoros, there's nothing really to fear." And he entered into a long and eager protest, jeering at the police, daring Thoros to prove that there were traitors in the ranks of the revolutionaries who would dare to drag from his own house the friend who had become like a brother to him. And whilst he strode up and down the room in his agitation, Thoros had lit a candle, taken some big bundles of letters from the drawer, and set them on the ground beside the candlestick, and was now looking through them one by one, tearing up some, and putting others carefully aside.

"You must take all these torn letters and burn the bits in the kitchen, Garéguin."

Garéguin made no reply. As he bent his tall figure over his friend, who still stooped over his pile of letters, Garéguin looked at him sadly. He had not the courage to hide his feelings, and he said with a note of tenderness in his voice: "My dear Thoros,

you are getting ready for a sad parting. You mean to leave us, and it seems as if it would be for ever."

"But I am not leaving you at all," protested Thoros, "it is the house that I am leaving, so that your home may not be compromised. We two shall often meet elsewhere. You must not forget that you have a mother, and it would be a terrible business for you to be obliged to leave her on my account."

"But have we not both sworn to sacrifice our nearest and dearest for the Cause?" And Garéguin grew pale. His grief was twofold, his best friend was leaving him, and perhaps he too, in his turn, would soon have to leave his mother as unwillingly as his friend was leaving him now. So he seemed to himself to be standing alone, a single man cut off from all the world, one who had broken, whether he would or not, with all personal ties. For the first time in his life he had a feeling of the complete isolation of the individual amongst his kind; a feeling as if he were a solitary grain of sand among the myriad other sand-grains in the desert. And bluntly he asked:

"You are going to leave this town?"

"Perhaps!"

"Then let us go together," he said, after a short silence.

"Impossible! My going is one reason the more for you to stay here and look after our business as long as you are in no danger. It would be a foolish thing for us both to leave our comrades here when one of us might safely stay. You know very well how much there is to be done in this town, and we always must have some one here who can direct the organisation."

Garéguin listened with bitter feelings at his heart.

"And more than that, it is not quite so easy to leave one's mother helpless in the middle of the street. I had to leave my father and mother," Thoros continued sadly, scanning a letter he held in his hand as he spoke. "Yes, I left them, and perhaps I shall never see them again, for they are far, very far away from here; but then there was the risk of compromising them if I were known to be with them, even for an hour; and you know what that means very well. They are old, too, poor things!" he went on, "and I can assure you that my heart aches when I picture to myself what their lonely life must be. . . . But come, you must help me over these letters, my dear fellow," he added hastily; "we shan't have too much time." And Garéguin set to work beside his friend. The lamp had drained all its oil, and had flickered out. The candle, but feebly lit, was set upon the floor, and the two men bent over the stacks of paper on the ground. They had a pre-occupied air, with quick, nervous movements, as they picked out the letters one by one, and hastily ran their eyes over them. Now and then they would linger over a line, or even a word, that recalled some distant, confused memory, or some figure, already lost in the fog of the past, but revived once more in their mind, or some sharp pang caused by failure. And ever and anon a sad smile would light the deep eyes of Thoros with strange fires.

"See, read that little letter," he said, passing two tiny sheets to Garéguin. "It is from my father. I keep it solely as a souvenir of the past." "

When Garéguin had finished reading the letter,

Thoros spoke again in a voice that was often broken, while both went on with their task.

"You must know that he wrote this letter when I left home for the University, which had given him trouble enough. There was never too much money, you see; but no matter what it was, the poor old man did everything he could for my education from my very childhood up." And he recalled many details of his life, the outline of which he had often sketched to his friend. These details were graven in his memory, each following each, but each separate and distinct, like a string of beads—like the dark amber beads of his grandmother, that taciturn old lady, whom he remembered always sharp and stern, so different to her son, his kindly father. But Thoros's father was a man of action, with laughing eyes, always merry, in spite of a tearful wife, even in the days of their greatest misfortunes; always frank, bold, and quick of temper, for which very reasons he had poor luck with his business affairs, and never succeeded in repairing his fortunes. This little letter of his, yellowed by time, upset Thoros now. He remembered the discussion he had had with his father the evening before it was written.

"You are leaving us, Thoros," his father had said to him kindly, and added more sadly: "go, you rascal, go! you must not waste your youth with such old folk as your father and mother." And as Thoros was about to protest, he interrupted him: "No, no, you must go to the University, and yet, and yet . . ." he muttered, "I am very much afraid that the road of your choice will never bring you back to Damascus."

"And what road is that?" asked Thoros, pretending not to understand his father.

"Oh, well, I don't know much about it myself, but you have already got perverse ideas and opinions."

"What do you mean, father?"

"Come, don't pretend not to understand me, boy," said the old man, getting a little angry; "the cat always knows when the meat is uncovered. You have got the revolution in your head, that's what it is. But you are still young, and then, when all's said and done, you have got your living to gain, for your father is a poor man. But if you cling to such ideas, you are bound to end your days in a desert somewhere or other in exile."

"So be it, sir!" Thoros had answered, quite unmoved. "Surely it is not an ignoble thing to sacrifice one's self for an idea?"

The old man got angry.

"Yes, yes, yes, I know all about these grand ideas that will never bring you in so much as a crust of bread"

"But, father, remember the words of Jesus, 'Man shall not live by bread alone' "

"Do not speak to me of Jesus! You and your young friends have set the Son of Man in the place of the Son of God. . . ." But after a long pause, he smiled, laughed his hearty laugh, and went on: "Our generation had its grand ideas, too, but it was sensible enough to only talk about them, and to go on working for its bread."

"Yes, father, and that's why we, its sons, are forced to make a hard choice; and all the heritage it has left us is, that we are free to perish without bread for the triumph of the Idea."

The old man cast a penetrating glance on his son,

but said nothing more. But his face contracted, and he tried to hide the tears that welled up to his eyes. He saw that henceforth his son's fate was sealed. When he went up to his bedroom, unable any longer to control himself, he muttered sadly: "It is all over, all over! These ideas of his can only bring him to a death in the desert in exile."

"Your father was a man to be loved, Thoros; although he was old, there was youth in his soul," exclaimed Garéguin.

"Yes, and I sometimes think I am as old as he was. Our generation has been aged before its time by the storm and struggle in which it is forced to spend all its youth—all its life."

They were both silent again, and for the next hour they went steadily on with their work—Garéguin, sad and disturbed in mind, Thoros, grave but full of tenderness. They arranged to see one another in the morning before Thoros left.

When Garéguin went off to bed at last, Thoros got up and sat down on a chair near the bureau, motionless, tired, weary-eyed, a prey to a pain that, muffled as yet, was hourly becoming more and more intense, as if it were slowly rising to threaten the very seat of his soul. Yes, he was old; he had grown old under the burden of a heavy task which weighed on his shoulders; he had grown old in the stress of the daily struggle—the endless struggle—terrible, stormy, with his eyes ever hopelessly turning towards the future that was still so far off, and hid so many mysteries in its shadowy bosom. And in the midst of the struggle the future seemed to him day by day to recede further from his eyes. So over the twilight sea the boat

creeps nearer and nearer to the shore, but every minute the falling night veils the cliffs more thickly, and at every stroke of the oar, though the boat still glides forward, it seems as if the desired land were fading farther from the sight. Thoros started, rose from his chair, and remained standing, his eyes fixed on the candle-light, or rather on the darkness that so closely surrounded the little island of light it made. Yes, there was nothing but a speck of light in the darkness of the future. He approached the window and opened it. A gust of wind came into the room and blew on his face. How fresh it was! He passed his hand across his hot brow. The sea, too, is fresh with an eternal freshness, in its eternal age. He gave ear to the elemental roar of its fury, and he gazed into the dark space outside. Yes, there had been a time when his feelings were also fresh, and he full of the intoxication of youth. That freshness he had lost; he had lost it with his own youth, although he had always kept a boundless faith in the Cause, in the future of the Nation, in the future of suffering Humanity, and in his supreme ideal of a happy brotherhood in an earthly paradise. Did these ideas of his actually make a faith? No, they were more than a faith to him. They had become certitude, acquired, weighed, proven by the cool reasoning of an open mind, and by an enlightened conscience. His Ideal was certain one day to be realised. It must open up a new era as inevitably as in the course of Nature day follows night. Nevertheless, it was only in his youth that this faith of his was capable of working miracles. He was then madly enamoured of the idea—dazzled, drunk with it; he

gave up his whole being to it, as Garéguin was doing to-day. His Ideal attracted him to it then like the thought of a beloved mistress; possessed him, and kept urging him on, wrapping him up in the glamour of a dream, in which he was held by this beautiful vision of the future, astounded, fascinated, admiring what he believed he saw, and believing what he admired. Ah! then he had devoted himself to the Ideal with eager energy, winged fancy, and fiery enthusiasm. Ah, what good days those were, and how far away! What leagues and leagues of water had flowed beneath the bridges since then! And in the midst of his struggle he had suddenly awakened, and now, though he still possessed all the force of his faith, yet himself he had grown old, very old, and would always be so.

And while he still stood thinking at the window, his looks plunged into the outer darkness. Suddenly Thoros shivered, for among the letters they had sorted he had come upon a packet apart, carefully sealed up many a long year ago, in that time of youth that he had been recalling with so much pain. And this little packet, that always and everywhere he had kept sacredly, he had unfastened to-day for the first time, and re-read the letters, trembling, and with bated breath. And suddenly, with a nervous movement, he had torn them into a hundred pieces, one after the other, in a kind of rage against his own youth, whose last links with himself he was thus destroying—alas! the only links left. And now a deep wound, never really healed, was suddenly opened in his soul. A cold shudder seized him. And then he stood motionless in the same spot, his looks lost in the

distance, hardly seeming to breathe, save that every now and then he would pass a shaking hand over his eyes and burning forehead. The wind shrieked and howled, crying aloud in its fury, rattling the room, bringing with it the angry noises of the inveterate sea. And standing there he could not snatch his eyes away from the shadow, where slowly a confused vision seemed to build itself up before him, in misty shape, suspended in empty air. But every moment this vision became more distinct, its outlines more defined ; now wavering, now staying, then wavering anew, but gradually gaining form, clear and embodied. It seemed to him that on the impenetrable background of the dusk, faint transparencies were taking the shape of a woman, whose pure, delicate, and harmonious outlines were half revealed beneath a gown of what looked like thin black muslin. A few more moments, and with pangs of acute anguish, he clearly discerned the face of his vision. A pale, delicate, oval face framed in wavy chestnut hair, white lips half-open, with the last sigh of suffering frozen there ; beneath the arch of the pencilled eyebrows, the great grey eyes had a melancholy look, profound and indefinitely sad ; a look that seemed to cross the void of space, to pierce the heart of Thoros. Oh, the anguish, the pathos, the suffering of that look ! Regret for the loss of a life half-opened like a morning flower, regret for lost happiness that had faded prematurely beneath the blast of human injustice. All the suffering and bitter sorrow of a love which had been shamelessly reviled and foully slandered, of anguish so intense that it had cost her young life. Thoros trembled all over, now his hands grew cold and

stiff, now, they twitched nervously; there was a ball in his throat that half stifled him. Once everything grew black before him, and he tottered and groped for some support; in spite of all his efforts a deep groan escaped from between his clenched teeth. Then once more the same beloved, adorable vision trembled in the air before him, and this time on the breast, above the heart, he thought he could see a tiny stream of blood, stealing down slowly, drop by drop, trickling, as it were, from the source of life, out of a cruel, deep, black wound. Yes, it was blood—the blood of the self-slain. And through the darkness of the night, mingled with the harsh howling of the careering wind, and the thunder of the raging sea, he seemed to hear one piercing, heart-breaking cry. Thoros had hardly taken two steps backwards, when he stumbled, the candle was quenched, and he fell swooning on a chair, striking his head on the bureau, and lying so, stunned for the moment. But he was not to reach oblivion so easily. And through the night in the dark of the solitary room, when for a moment the wind ceased to howl with its long-drawn moans and wild, melancholy plaints, there were to be heard other groans and tears as full of pain and anguish—groans and tears that came from the depths of a human heart. Ceaselessly and pitifully he called and no answer came, till his voice rose and fell with the storm, ever hurrying and speeding into space, across the wide waste of air, towards the Unknown and the Infinite, where that adorable and sad-faced figure stood, dripping with the blood that stole down her breast drop by drop, from a cruel, deep, black wound.

CHAPTER IV

"REVOLUTIONARY TALK"

IT was a bright Sunday morning in winter. The lofty clouds looked milky white against the blue enamelled sky ; the huge vault of the slumbering heavens seemed to soar high above the vast expanse of the sea, whose waves, in the clear, cold sunshine, moving over the polished surface, looked like the ripple of light on a still mirror. From the side of the terraced town the wooded, hilly shores ran down in a gentle slope toward the sea. A sweet calm reigned over all. Small flocks of merry, restless sparrows collected here and there, busy and inquisitive, picking and hopping about, and then in their jerky way took wing upward in a confused, wavy line towards the hilltops. A bleak wind was whistling.

Suddenly the church bells broke the silence, and their slow, resounding vibrations thrilled through the air into the distance.

"There go the bells! Run and change your dress, child ; our guests will be here in an hour"

The speaker was an aged woman, busy arranging the furniture of her room.

"Do you think Garéguin will come, mother?" asked a girl of about twenty, who was sitting by the window, and as she spoke she turned her pensive black eyes away from her mother.

"Of course, isn't he betrothed to you?"

Slowly a blush mounted to the young girl's white cheeks, as she stood up with downcast eyes.

"I do hope the other won't come too," she said thoughtfully.

"Who? The one who wanted to marry you?"

"Yes, Tirajian."

"But you see, child, he is a useful man for us to know. Of course, he is a Constantinople Armenian, and we Armenians of Armenia have not much love for the city Armenians. Still, Tirajian has a good position. He is a rising lawyer, and he belongs to several learned societies."

"Ah, I don't like those societies of Constantinople people! It seems to me, that they are only kept up for reasons of personal interest, or out of pure vanity," the young girl said emphatically.

"My dear Aroossiak, how often have I told you not to mix yourself up in unwomanly discussions. Go along, I tell you, and change your frock."

"But, mamma, if I think so about these societies, why mustn't I say so?" protested Aroossiak timidly.

"That's the one thing lacking to young girls nowadays," rejoined the mother bitterly, nervously plucking the withered leaves of a little rose-tree that was standing in a pot on the table. "The one thing still left for you to do is to mix yourself up in politics."

"And why not, mother?" said the young girl,

tossing back her beautiful hair, and looking frankly into her mother's eyes. She, for her part, stopped short and gazed at her daughter with an angry gesture.

"You are wrong, Aroossiak," she said slowly, after a short silence. "You are quite wrong," she repeated. "Your proper business is to think about being a good mother and a good housewife."

"What for? There are plenty of them."

"Aroossiak!" cried the mother wrathfully.

"Well, mother?"

There was a moment's silence, whilst the two women looked fixedly and resolutely at one another in dumb opposition. The mother broke out.

"Child that you are, how can you understand the meaning of what you have just said? Do you mean to cut yourself loose at one stroke from all the good your mother has tried to set before you all your life? If you do, you are cutting yourself loose from happiness and peace too. I know you, always so headstrong about all your little wants—your father's spoiled darling. Your father, who at this very moment is doing his best to spoil your brother over at Constantinople. Well, well, it will be a fit reward for him some fine morning when he finds out all the harm he has brought upon you in choosing a young fellow like Garéguin for your tutor."

"So you don't like Garéguin, mother?" Aroossiak asked thoughtfully.

"I like him well enough. Yes, yes, but he is not good enough to be the son-in-law of your father! Your father may say what he likes, but he has certainly paved the way for his daughter's unhappiness and future son-in-law's too."

"But Garéguin and I love each other; what more could you have, mother? I think my father has done right; people don't marry to please their relations, but themselves."

"Pretty ideas, indeed!" the mother exclaimed, her anger breaking out anew. "These are the ideas put into your head by Garéguin and Thoros, and the other young men, who take such advantage of your father's good-nature, and are hardly ever out of the house. You have picked up all this folly from their discussions and conversation. While you sit dumb in a corner, listening, these men pervert and spoil you. My God!" she cried bitterly, "why have they perverted my child?" and added, after a pause: "That good Markos was right when he was always saying how much he disliked this new-fangled set of young men that have thrown over all the good, old-fashioned ways. And I, silly creature **that** I was, never even to guess that I had such a daughter! But I've heard from her own lips to-day what I little thought to hear, and I am punished too! I am punished too!"

Her mother's visible pain came unexpectedly upon Aroossiak. She herself was astonished at the turn the conversation had taken after beginning so simply, and she loved her mother tenderly. She had never dreamed that her mother's consent to her marriage with Garéguin had been given unwillingly. It now flashed upon her that the son-in-law after her mother's heart was this very Markos, an old bachelor, with the reputation of a clever man, in spite of a sharp tongue and an unsociable disposition. His malice was put down to his failure as a journalist, and to his poor

position, very far below his pretensions ; for he had always remained the ill-paid master of a small girls' school. In a moment the long, bony figure of Markos rose before her mind's eye, always clad in the same long, loose, shabby frock-coat, which had lost its original colour. Aroossiak remembered him in this frock-coat from her earliest childhood. And she shuddered at the thought of his dark, bearded, unsmiling face, with its dull black eyes, bilious skin, and sour look.

Her mother was crying now, and Aroossiak drew close to her, saying in a tender voice: "Listen, mamma dear, do you really believe that Markos is a better man than Garéguin?"

"Yes, child," said the mother, the anger still in her voice. "Yes, certainly. Markos is a solid, sensible, practical man, whilst this Garéguin is not the man to manage a household well, to protect his family, to make his wife happy."

"But if he loves me, that is all I ask."

"Love!" said the mother, with a scornful smile. "Ah, child! that is quite a secondary thing in marriage. Did I love your father, pray? All my parents said was, 'He is a good man, and has a little money; he will make you happy.' The rest came of itself."

"But, mamma, mamma," said Aroossiak in a caressing tone, "I couldn't do as you did. I would far rather not be married at all than not follow my own feelings."

And as the mother was about to protest again, voices were heard in the hall. Aroossiak ran out of the room by a door on the left hand, whilst her mother,

who recognised the voice of one of her good friends, walked into the hall.

A woman of about forty years entered, accompanied by a young girl of seventeen, and a young man of middle height, correctly attired, with fresh, shaven cheeks, and holding himself very⁴ straight. His manners were animated and vivacious.

"What a pity that you were not at church, Gaiané!" exclaimed the new-comer, a big, plump woman, as she embraced her hostess. "The Bishop gave us such a sermon, such a sermon!"

"Excellent! Quite unique in its kind! Really inimitable, and so edifying, too! What an orator he is! What a talent he has!" the young man's voice was shrill and piercing.

"Even over in Constantinople I have never heard such a sermon. But aunt does not agree with me. Do you, aunt?" and he turned impetuously to the new arrival. Before she could reply the young man stopped her with a gesture, crying: "I give you my word, Gaiané *hanoom*, the word of an experienced lawyer of the High Court, a man who works for his nation, and is in touch with every Armenian, notable, civil, ecclesiastical, in Constantinople."

"Oh yes, aunt, cousin is right, as he always is," cried the young girl, a frail, undeveloped creature, with a pale, thin face. "Oh, what a talent he has, and what beautiful words he uses, the Bishop!"

"Yes, you might really call them pearls! And then how they flow on and on!" said the young man ecstatically.

"And every one as sweet as honey," added the young girl.

All this was spoken fast, eagerly, with many exclamations, with all the gesticulation and deliberate pantomime of literary connoisseurs, critics who knew the value of things.

"I don't know; it certainly was a fine sermon, but then there are plenty of other preachers quite as good," the young man's aunt at last edged in.

As everybody was still standing, the hostess now begged them to sit down, and herself took off the aunt's cloak, while the conversation turned to the subject of the weather, or upon acquaintances they had just seen at church, or on the small details of domestic life, such as the cost of provisions, which was increasing daily. The young lawyer from Constantinople took the chief part in these conversations, always speaking with affected warmth, posing as the man of universal taste, waving his hands, raising his voice, delighting in his own supposed cleverness, though he always said the first thing his wits suggested, and never, when the slightest opportunity offered, forgetting to recite at full length or even to invent wonderful accounts of the great lawsuits in which he had been engaged. He fancied himself a poet, too, a man of feeling. He liked to talk about the beautiful weather, the sky, and the sea, and "the peculiarly personal impressions" that Nature made upon his "sensitive soul." He was very glib at describing the fashionable colours of the dresses worn by the women and girls at church. He rolled out a torrent of vague, empty, and sounding phrases when he spoke of the patriotism of the Armenian ecclesiastics and notables, whose wisdom, sermons, and deeds he altogether approved, especially

as they tended to counteract the ideas of the Revolutionary movement. He himself had been a true patriot from his tenderest years, when he used to burst into tears as he listened to the reading of patriotic poetry. So he went on volubly at his shrillest, till Aroossiak entered the room, when, after saluting her gallantly, he put on a more composed and oratorical air, and began to declaim his words with clangorous fervour.

The aunt loudly and sincerely admired her nephew's talent. His hostess gave him her decided approbation, whilst the delicate cousin never ceased to punctuate his elaborate phrases with broken and admiring exclamations.

Presently, however, new guests were announced. A little, withered old woman, dressed in black, glided in, followed by two men, one of whom was her brother, Markos, the other a man of thirty, with a reddish-brown beard.

"You have just come from church, too, have you not? Ah, what a sermon!" The young man from Constantinople addressed Markos, when, after the customary salutation, the company was seated.

Markos was content to answer with a nod, casting a sidelong look the while at Aroossiak, who was talking in undertones to the young advocate's cousin.

"Tirajian *effendi* is charmed with to-day's sermon," said Gañané *hanoom* to Markos, whose opinion had the effect upon her of a verdict.

"Yes, I was charmed," said the young advocate.

"H'm!" said Markos, stretching his rather bald head forward. "It was most healthy in its ideas and

tendency, but the Bishop himself is not responsible for that ; that is due to the patriarch of Constantinople. All that the Bishop is responsible for is the form, which, I must say, was very poor."

And as he raised his head calmly, with the air of a man who has definitely given judgment, Tirajian, his aunt, and cousin uttered loud protests

"But it is just his style, the form of his speech, that is so delightful and inimitable," cried the advocate, and began to enter upon an elaborate proof of his statement.

However, he was interrupted once more by the arrival of Garéguin, who looked sad, and, after greeting everybody, took a place a little apart. His arrival rather embarrassed Tirajian for a time, and reduced him to silence, whilst it was clear that Markos carefully avoided his eye. For, indeed, he looked on Garéguin as his rival, and had gone so far as to suspect for some little time that the young man was betrothed to Aroossiak ; but he had not found out the truth yet, for it was still a family secret.

"I am sure M. Garéguin will be of my opinion. Were you at church to-day?" demanded Tirajian.

"Oh, Garéguin! he is an atheist, he doesn't go to church," said Markos, quickly and maliciously.

"One need not be an atheist to leave off going to a church where they preach slavery, and praise the magnanimity of brutal ruffians," replied Garéguin.

Several exclamations arose.

"But that's revolutionary talk! You see what our young men think nowadays," said Markos, with an air of authority, feigning indignation, and addressing the whole party.

"I don't know what you mean, and I don't much care. If it is revolutionary to ask and pray for Justice, then I am a revolutionary."

This declaration, simply and gravely made, came upon every one as a surprise. The ladies, who had barely begun to gossip among themselves, turned with astonishment towards Garéguin. Aroossiak questioned him with an entreating and loving look, and, seeing this, the young man regained his serenity. But at the same time he was troubled vaguely by a feeling that this day was to decide the fate of his love; there seemed to be a dull resistance to him in the very air of the house. However, he was roused sharply when he heard the sharp voice of Markos once more saying disdainfully: "A fine reform indeed you're going to make in our social life! We were and are quite satisfied with our life as it is. Indeed, what is there left to wish for? We have our little bit of daily bread, let us eat it and be wise."

"And those who have not got even that morsel, who are miserable, what must they do?" asked Garéguin in mocking tones.

"Nothing, they should do nothing," replied Markos, energetically. "Let life go on as it will, that is to say, as it has done heretofore."

"Yes, but suppose the consequences that naturally arise, without our intervention, out of this do-nothing policy are such as to rob us of freedom and justice?"

Markos did not at once reply.

"That is the inference of a heated fancy," he said at last. "You can't change the whole of existence at one stroke."

"But might you not, some day, make a beginning?"

I know that there are plenty of serious questions in our life. There is the condition of the poor peasant and the ill-to-do artisan. There is the question of education. There is the question of marriage, which at present is carried on like the sale and purchase of chattels, and again——" But their protests stopped him.

"No, M. Garéguin," said the sister of Markos in shrill tones. "No, at any rate, leave that alone; Marriage is a sacred state! Let us do as our fathers have done before us all these ages past."

"Well said, indeed!" cried the young lawyer's aunt.

"Yes, my sister is right," said Markos. "I don't think such questions should ever be raised in a respectable family, such as that of my esteemed friend here."

"Just so," exclaimed Tirajian. "If you had only come to church this morning the Bishop would have easily persuaded you that our marriages are the purest that exist in the world. The state of obedience, the candid and passive submission of the young girl to the will of her experienced and affectionate relatives—could anything be nobler, more modest, more truly poetical?"

"Modest, above all!" the young man with the red beard said impressively.

And the protests continued from all sides—Markos, especially, could not retain his rancour against Garéguin.

Tirajian took the occasion to display his intellect with plentiful gesticulations and studied oratorical exclamations. The young man with the red beard

struck in decisively, posing as a reactionary," who regrets that the patriarchal age is past. The women joined in the talk from time to time. Only Aroossiak was silent, and sat with bent head, downcast eyes, and flaming cheeks, pulling at the fringe of her shawl with trembling fingers.

"I tell you that all reforms, whatever they are, are wholly contrary to the spirit of our traditions and to our habits. Our Holy Church, our patriarchal family, and our loyalty to the Government of the country—that is all that is needful, all we want. I would advise this young gentleman to have done with his cynical philosophy; immoral ideas and opinions and childish dreams corrupt the very soul of youth, and turn the people from the good paths of resignation and prudence."

But this time, after Markos's long tirade, spoken in a loud, angry voice and with a tone of proud indignation, Garéguin broke out:

"Then, let us change nothing, since horrors and corruption suit us so well, since ignorance, lies, and deception are sacred things, and wisdom lies therein! Keep woman for man's slave and plaything; let us go on making a vile bargain of marriage, and call it the highest morality! Let us soak our children in ignorance and prejudice in the Church schools; let us go on paying dues indefinitely to convents and churches that have become mere dens of thieves and shops of conscience-mongers, and call the institution that fosters this conception Holy Church! Let us make belief a terror to the people, so as to frighten them in the name of God into remaining in distress and misery. Then let us cease to think,

since we ought not to be allowed to read, write, print, or speak. Let us cease to live, and just lie on as we do now, in a degrading, semi-conscious torpor. Let us abandon the people, those who suffer and work, to their double slavery, political and economic. Let us behave as if we were dead, for the wise men of to-day tell us that wisdom consists in inaction. And when they spit in our faces, let us say a merciful Heaven is raining! When we are crushed under the triple weight of moral lies, political barbarism, and material slavery, let us bless, in the name of tradition, the hand that casts the burden upon us. When we are openly abused as idiots, as traitors, as slaves—again and forever, let us pray that nothing, nothing may be changed. But let us go down on our knees and cry to the brutes that martyr us: ‘Long live Lies’ Long live our good Masters!’”

Disconcerted, silent, almost ashamed, they listened to him, whilst he stood with white face and great wide eyes, trembling all over with the rage of his indignation. And there was a light of triumph in his eyes when he saw his beloved with flushed cheeks and looks full of admiration and love bent upon him.

“It is quite clear *that* is revolutionary talk,” Markos growled, after a silence, in a low voice, and with a significant tone. And with a furtive look beneath his brows at the hostess, he added: “For my part, I say that such ideas should not even be mentioned in a respectable family.”

“Then they must not be provoked,” Garéguin retorted.

But now Madame Gaiané was bidding them come in to dinner, and the ladies led the way into the

dining-room, whispering among themselves. As she passed Garéguin, Markos's sister put on a scornful expression, but her brother went up to the young man with forced amiability, laughing drily, and saying: "You are really a dangerous man, my dear sir, a dangerous man; you would like to take up arms against everything."

"And everybody, my dear *effendi*, who tries to prevent my fighting," Garéguin imitated him ironically.

"Then your glove must lie in the mud," said the other with an unmistakable sneer.

"Naturally; there is nothing but mud about."

"Yet I believe you come here searching for a pearl," was the retort, and this allusion to Aroossiak was said in bitterly malicious tones.

"I do, for fear it may be cast before swine," and with an ironical salute he turned and stepped to the window.

For the moment Garéguin was alone.

A pearl! he thought. Could he draw her out of the mud, or would she also in due time adopt the lying, cringing ways of the others?

CHAPTER V

UNDER THE LILACS

SEVERAL weeks passed. With the first days of April came the glad, sweet sunshine. The trees began to bud. In the fields and gardens the first flowers timidly showed their little many-coloured heads. All the green leaves showed bright and young again, as every morning the curtain of the luminous mist lifted. The mountains, fresh clad and smiling, crowned the city. From their feet the dark-blue sea, calm and majestic, stretched away into the distance. The air was laden with warmth and sweetness.

In a little parlour, by the open window looking on the garden, Gaiané *hanoom* sat sewing. She seemed preoccupied. Opposite her was Arcoosiak, dressed in a simple fawn-coloured gown, book in hand, buried in an armchair. However, she was not reading, her beautiful eyes had at that moment a dreamy expression. Her face, with its delicate features, looked rather thin and pale. Her silky hair lay low on her pure brow. A scarcely perceptible tremor of the lips betrayed secret uneasiness.

"Do you consider him unworthy of you, then?"

said Garané *hanoom* after a long silence, still bending over her work.

Aroossiak did not answer at once. She looked up at her mother, and then down at her book, and began to flutter the edges of the leaves nervously with long, thin fingers.

"I don't say that, mother," she said at last undecidedly, "but we are so unlike one another."

"There's another notion I dislike!" exclaimed the mother, pricking the linen which she was sewing fiercely with her needle. "A man is always a man, and a young girl only marries one that can keep a family, and make a good husband. Where does the difference lie? Surely Tirajian is everything that you need look for. . . ."

"Do you think, mother, that the chaffinch can nest with the swallow?" said Aroossiak after a short pause, following with her eye the flight of a swift till it was lost in the misty distance. And as her mother only frowned, she added: "So he has asked you for my hand?" she hesitated a moment, and then said harshly: "I can't consent . . . no, no, mother."

Garané *hanoom* became angry. No, it was quite impossible that she should marry a revolutionary, and a poor one, too, who would be obliged to starve himself if he was to support his wife . . . and what was to become of the children of such a man? . . . It meant misery—nothing else! "No," she concluded with energy, "it is totally impossible for you to marry this man! Think over what I have been saying to you for weeks past."

Aroossiak became gloomy. What her mother had been saying to her for weeks past had thrown her

into a state of continual suffering, and made her heart feel as heavy as a stone. At that moment it all came upon her more acutely, with more intensity. The terrible hour was drawing near every moment. Was it really true that she was going to make Garéguin unhappy, chaining down to humdrum family life the free eagle that loved to soar in his dreams above worldly things; the man that had devoted himself under an oath of life and death to the Cause of his people? She shuddered as though half frozen.

After a silence Garané *hanoom* resumed in severe tones :

"It is quite decided, Aroossiak. You shall not marry Garéguin. You will marry Tirajian, or nobody at all."

Aroossiak leapt from the armchair and said in a voice that trembled with excitement :

"In that case, I prefer to renounce both . . ."

Her face paled, sobs rose in her throat, but she was able to control herself; and as she stood proudly and rigidly in front of her mother, the elder woman fell into a fury of rage, first cursing her daughter, and then praying to her, and finally imploring her with tears to follow her advice and marry Tirajian.

"At any rate, wait now," she concluded, growing somewhat calmer; "and I will tell all this to Garéguin himself; he will be here in half an hour's time . . . I will tell him everything . . . You think over it too . . . speak to him, too, if you like . . . but I have made up my mind, you shall never marry him. . . . It must be Tirajian or nobody."

Aroossiak made no answer. She rushed out of the room, passed through the hall, and down into the garden, when she stopped short after taking a few steps. Her head was burning ; she had no clear perception as yet of her situation. She felt faint, and leant against the trunk of a tree for some instants. Then she resumed her walk with slow, uncertain steps, the book still in her hand. . . . By degrees calm came back to her. She seemed to herself in a dream, her thoughts in a mist, her soul chilled, and her feelings confused.

As she passed a flower-bed, she stopped to smell its sweetness. Further on she touched with gentle fingers the first leaves of an acacia, then she stopped before a rose-tree whose few flowers, rich and deep in colour, attracted her. She gazed at them for some time, melancholy, pensive, and then raised her eyes to the bright blue sky, that rose above her, a vast and mighty arch of azure. One big white cloud, silvery and soft-edged, was gliding slowly across, gradually dispersing first one fragment and then another, each as it broke away, becoming longer and longer and more and more attenuated and transparent, and melting at last into wool-like threads. Aroossiak followed this dying cloud with her eyes for some moments, and then turned her face towards the sun, whose rays began to lengthen the shadows of the trees with their meagre foliage ; and she moved slowly towards a lilac-tree, all blossoming and fragrant. Here again she touched the flowers delicately with her fingers, then broke off a tiny branch ; and, breathing in the scent, she seated herself on a chair which she herself had brought out that

morning. Her attitude betrayed lassitude, her face was clouded with melancholy, the gentle breeze stirred a wavy lock of hair about her brows. Then she opened her book and began to turn its pages listlessly, whilst from time to time her eye dwelt vaguely on a page or a line. At last she let the book fall on her lap, and began to pluck the little flowers, one by one, from the lilac-branch she was holding in her hand. There was a melancholy calm, at times a sort of unconsciousness, about her movements. All the while she seemed to herself to be in a dream, her thoughts were fugitive and confused, till they recurred to the conversation she had had with her mother, at which her cheeks grew pale. Then she would recall some happy time with Garéguin, or fancy she heard the chatter of Tirajian in her ear. Sometimes the sour, atrabilious visage of Markos made her shiver. All was confusion in her head and before her eyes—the flowers she had seen, the blooming rose-tree, the passing cloud, the sun, the book, and herself, seated there plucking at the lilac. . . . And her hands shook. The time seemed long and slow, and suspense awful . . . the suspense? . . . Why? . . . What could she say to him? . . . At that question she shuddered. Then she expected some one?

And just then she saw Garéguin approaching through the trees, stopping an instant, his head turned left and right as if he was looking for some one; then, having seen her whom he sought, he hastened his steps and hurried towards her, but with no joyous face. He stretched out his hand, which she clasped mechanically.

"Why, Aroossiak, are you ill?"

She started suddenly as if awakened from a dream. Garéguin was there, standing before her.

"No, it is nothing . . . but I have a headache to-day . . ." she stammered, blushing and confused, with downcast eyes. There was a silence. Words failed them, and they could not look at one another.

Garéguin, whose handsome face betrayed his secret anxiety, first broke the silence with a deep sigh, and then said briefly, forcing himself to speak calmly and simply :

"Your mother has just told me everything in a few words. . . . She begged me to see you. . . . She said you wanted to speak to me. ." He stopped abruptly.

The young girl raised her eyes to his with looks full of sorrow and love. She shook her head with a vague gesture.

"What! Is it all over between us?" exclaimed Garéguin, and he became very white. "Have you nothing to say to me? . . . You have made up your mind . . . you have really settled to marry that man." His voice broke again, and he could hardly trust himself to speak the last words. His heart beat violently and his eyes flashed strangely. Impatient and alarmed, he gazed into the eyes of Aroossiak.

"No," the young girl said at last in a calm but feeble voice. "No," she said again, and her voice trembled, "nothing is over . . . nothing is settled."

"But your mother has quite decided to refuse me your hand, for she has just told me so."

Aroossiak suddenly roused herself. She had

just heard the fatal word "refusè," which she had been flying from unawares—on which instinctively she would not dwell, but which had pursued her all the same for days and nights. This time the blow was direct; she rose abruptly, and approached the young man; and all the pent-up suffering of a week overflowed into words, irresistibly, painfully.

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" she moaned. "Since I have known you I have felt all the falsity, all the deceit, all the emptiness of the people that surround me, with whom I breathe an air that they poison. You have made the air fresh, you have brought in a breath of life, and since then every little thing, every feeling and thought, all the men and women I see, life itself, and the whole world have a different meaning in my eyes. My heart has gained something noble, pure, and high from your thoughts, from you, from your nature. And suddenly they want to take away all this new life from me, they want to make me the yoke-fellow of a man who will root out of my heart all that I begin to possess when I am near you. . . ." And she stopped, half choked.

Garéguin said tenderly : "My poor Aroossiak, cannot I say the same? . . . Now, as ever, you give me new strength. . . . The other day, do you remember, nearly a month ago, I met some of the people you speak of at your house, and I got angry, like a fool—for those people are just reefs of selfishness and reaction on which every wave of living thought is vainly spent. Afterwards, when I got home, I was sorry that I had spoken as I did, for it was only because my anger got the

better of me. I remembered then how Thoros said to me three months before he left for Constantinople—'Above all, don't waste your strength on imbeciles and pettinesses.' But that is just what I did the other day . . . and I was angry with myself. But some days after, when I saw you, I bethought myself that it was to rescue you from this slough that I acted. It was to have your good word of encouragement that I had vowed to struggle for the right against all things and all people, were they great or small. Yes, Aroossiak, side by side with you, my fair omen for the future, my guiding-star, with your hand in mine, and your breath in my soul, we two ought always to go forward to fight for our belief, to change the whole of life for the good of the common weal, always wishing for the general happiness. But now all this hope seems to me like a glimpse lost in the distant future, a radiant, miraculous dream. . . . and it sprung from the tie that binds us!"

With big eyes Aroossiak looked at him in dumb admiration.

"Ah, how good it would be!" she said with a melancholy smile, whilst her eyes were drowned in a kind of reverie. "Ah, how good it is to think of oneself away from this narrow, tyrannical atmosphere, is it not? To feel like birds, boldly cleaving the air, free to fly into the immensity of space or battle with the winds . . . to feel like a brave, strong swimmer in a vast sea, fighting the waves, the currents . . ."

"And in the ecstasy of our own love, to feel love for every creature, for humanity itself, and so to

live or die in the effort to realise our beautiful dream." And he seized the young girl's hands.

For a moment they remained thus without moving, face to face, and with loving, tender looks. . . . But suddenly Aroossiak became uneasy. She drew back a pace, and said sadly, as if she were thinking aloud :

"Ah! mother, what have you made of me? what have you done to me? My courage fails me when I hear your voice in my ear. . . . She told me I should be unhappy, and that I should make you unhappy too, you, Garéguin? Can it be really true? Should I in the future, as she said, fetter your feet with a heavyweight, tearing your ideas away from you, killing your ideal that you cherish with all your strength?"

"O Aroossiak, it is you, you that are the source of all my will and strength!"

"But my mother told me so . . . and I am afraid that perhaps it's true. For, don't you see, the conditions of our life do not permit me, a woman, to work unfettered by your side, and a family would only be a punishment, and forge a chain for you. . . ."

Aroossiak's voice became more and more dreamy, her face grew more sombre with the shadow of sad resignation.

"Never!" Garéguin almost shrieked, suddenly possessed with a secret fear. . . . "Never! What you say may be true, but it is just at that point that our struggle will begin. From the very beginning of our marriage we must trample under foot all the hindrances, public or private, that stand in our way, which stop our aspirations—our good impulses. . . . Ah, Aroossiak, I only need you to inspire me, and I shall do it!"

"Yes, yes," replied the young girl pensively, "but suppose it should not turn out as you say . . . then—then, in the future lies the ruin of our dreams, and the bitter memory of to-day's enthusiasms will be a weight on our hearts then. . . . O my Garéguin, better for us to die than to see the death of the ideals we cherish now; for if they died our hearts could only be tombs for the ashes and decay of all that ennobles us to-day!"

"And yet, and yet," said Garéguin, in slow, anxious tones, "you had none of these forebodings before. . . . You were in ecstasies when you thought of the war that we had vowed to make against everything and everybody. . . ."

"Ah, those glowing ecstasies!" lamented Aroossiak. "Why didn't you seize me then and carry me away from my surroundings? Now you see I am fallen away." And, painfully agitated, she continued her lament. Her mother, her friends, and all around her had poisoned her mind with doubts. All kinds of prejudices, presentiments of disaster, and fearful predictions had been whispered in her ear. Her dream had been rudely snatched from her, and in exchange she was given terrible realities; all her hopes, her pride, had been shaken. More and more it became impossible for her to give her heart entirely and passionately to the dreams of a union with Garéguin, the union which she had once imagined so full of life, of splendid work, and of love. To her family, opposed to all the true and beautiful side of life, this marriage appeared a disaster, and she feared lest it might wreck their dreams and themselves.

Garéguin's face darkened the longer she spoke.

"Is it possible that they can have won you back, that they can have estranged your heart from mine?"

"No, Garéguin, nothing in the world could estrange my heart from yours. . . . But for some time past a curious feeling has come over me, and it troubles my very soul. . . ."

Ah, what she had suffered for days! She felt now as if she was beaten down and overwhelmed. She felt alone, alone and hanging over an abyss . . . not having yet detached herself from all that bound her to the past and to all her accustomed surroundings, dreading the sacrifice she would have to make if she quitted her mother and father for ever; for *that* the Cause absolutely exacted, while at the same time the vision of the man she loved was before her eyes like a persistent shadow, hovering around her, standing over everything—noble, fair to look on, but unattainable. . . . Yes, she had grown to feel herself alone, alone . . . even bereft of the one she loved best, with whom she had thought to find the strength to live a life of continual warfare, a life that should make her dreams realities.

With bowed head, powerless to utter another word, and deadly pale, she suddenly realised what she had just said. It meant separation from the man she loved—separation? . . . Did she want that? Was it not her weak heart, her feeble soul that spoke thus . . . another Aroossiak, the young girl that existed before she met Garéguin and loved him, that now appeared again with all her weaknesses at the instant when her fate was to be decided? At this last thought Aroossiak felt ready to faint. She took

several hasty steps backwards and sank back into her chair.

Garéguin, his heart now choking with a deadly presentiment, turned to her and stammered beseechingly, almost with tears: "What are you saying, what are we doing, Aroossiak? No, no, it can't be you that speak . . . you who were ready for every sacrifice! You have often told me that you wished to be with me always, everywhere, that you had absolute faith in our dreams. Speak, speak again, tell me you were only raving just now, it was only a momentary weakness. . . ."

As he went on to plead in his extreme agitation—almost despair—Aroossiak could no longer restrain the tears that rose to her eyes and poured over her pale cheeks. And now, beside himself, Garéguin threw himself on his knees before her, and seizing her hands, began to cover them with kisses, speaking broken words of yearning and caressing, in the intervals of the most acute mental suffering. He begged her not to give way, to recover the strength of her past ecstasy, to stay always beside him in undying love, to force a way through life, to flee from the past and from the surroundings that crushed the whole noble nature of the young girl, and degraded all her higher feelings; to fly with him now, at that very instant, far away into the depths of the country, where they would live simply, like peasants, face to face with Nature, and fight the great fight for the people, in the midst of the people, absorbed in a two-fold love—love for the Cause and love for one another. So together, always together, they would press forward to accomplish the great task of renovation.

"Come, Aroossiak," he exclaimed, "let us go forth at once to those beautiful places where every day our existence will be more and more fortified by our love, and our strength for the struggle renewed by the mysterious tie that binds our souls!"

"Ah, it is a beautiful dream!" Aroossiak said, smiling in a subtle and melancholy way. "And to think that it is only a dream, and that I must be fettered by chains, just as mysterious, to these surroundings that I hate, but that rob me at the last moment of my will, so that I can neither fly nor defy my enslavers . . . Fly? . . . Give that all up? . . . Ah, Garéguin, I haven't the strength. I know I have not the courage for that, and for all the sacrifices that in my ecstasy I thought I could make. I want to, but I can't."

Garéguin rose up quickly, and he spoke bitterly, and with grief:

"No, you do not love me. Your love was only a passing dream, for you have not the strength to give up all for it . . . No, you do not love me," he added, almost with a sob, "our souls have lost their kinship, and from this moment I am no longer needed here Speak," he almost cried, after a short pause, "speak—give me a gleam of hope that I am deceived."

Aroossiak remained motionless as if lost in reverie, weary and overcome, with closed eyes drowned in tears. After a moment she spoke in melancholy, dreamy tones, as if talking to herself:

"Why is it not my fate to be with him, without torment and struggles—just we two alone—thinking only of ourselves, admiring and loving one another

for ever? Why is my beautiful dream torn from me? I feel so weak beside him, far too weak to follow him in his flight—his lonely, solitary flight. . . . And yet it was this dream of his, this daring flight of his, that first made me love him."

"Aroossiak," said Garéguin in beseeching tones, "O my flower, cast on rocky places, what has come over you? What is the matter? Are you wandering?"

Aroossiak went on in the same voice: "Yes, I do love him . . . for he is the daring dreamer, and he is the lover that has brought the scents of spring about my heart for ever . . ."

Suddenly she was silent, and she shivered violently; then, rising with sudden anguish, she went up to the young man, who stood, overwhelmed and despairing, his head bowed, and his arms hanging.

"No, no, my Garéguin, I am not worthy of you," she spoke quickly. "I did not know my own weakness. . . . No, I must not be the cause of your inaction; I must not stop your way by burdening you with sordid daily cares; I will not destroy your dream instead of giving you constant strength and enthusiasm. Ah, live alone and free, since thus you must be to gain your hopes! . . . Remember how you once told me that the submissive resignation of our mothers got into our blood. Perhaps it will give me the strength to endure far from you, knowing the while that you are free as the wind on your field of battle, as broad as the world!"

"But what are you saying, Aroossiak? You are leaving me! You are bidding me farewell!" and Garéguin, half-stunned, felt as if he were in a bad dream.

"Let me speak, let me say it," Aroossiak interrupted him hastily in a broken voice, whilst her hurried words betrayed her deep emotion. "Yes, yes, you will stay in my heart. . . . My soul will never belong to any one else—never; it will always be yours—always yours. . . . I shall never lose the memory of this one spring-time we have had together—so beautiful, so good. A new life is opening for you, full of courage and enthusiasm. . . . Don't you see, I haven't the strength to break the chains that bind me to the past, to all that I have learnt to be under my mother's roof. . . . Go, my Garéguin, and perhaps some day you will be able to change life. . . . Ah! as yet it is only changed in your dreams, in your beautiful dreams!"

"Then you can't follow me?" said Garéguin painfully. "Then I can't tear you away from this world of yours, that buries its vulture-claws in your soul and corrupts it. It has beaten me. But no, no!" he exclaimed after a pause, and with a sudden illumination, "I will not lose my beloved in the fight. I will take you with me—you, too, are a rebel. But the air is new to you. Yet, perhaps, you are right. Let us part, then, let us part, for I see, I feel, that something strange has come between us. . . ."

Garéguin's last words drew a groan from Aroossiak.

"No . . . yes . . ." she moaned out with an effort, trying to keep back her tears.

"I will keep my dream. I believe in it. I will not hesitate at any sacrifice, no matter what it cost me," said Garéguin once more, and his voice thrilled; "and though I lose you, though my dreams of our fighting side by side have vanished, yet I shall have

your soul in mine, following me everywhere, in all my struggles, giving me power and courage. Now," he added as if in an ecstasy, "now, give me your hand for the last time. . . . In another week I shall have left the town. Press my hand. . . . From to-day my flag shall be unfurled to every wind under heaven, and on its folds I shall write these words: 'The soldier of love and dreams.'"

Just then a swallow alighted on the lilac-tree, and trilled out its low, clear, whistling notes. The sun's last rays shone on the window-panes as it sunk in the horizon flushed with distant fires. The garden was dim with soft twilight.

One instant Garéguin and Aroossiak remained silent, gazing in one another's eyes, with clasped hands.

A moment later and Garéguin was gone. Aroossiak stood out there a long, long time, stunned and pale, her tearful eyes fixed with a sad, weary gaze upon the acacia that hid the path of him who had vanished for ever—the soldier of her dream; for she, too, had her dream. . . .

CHAPTER VI

SOME ARMENIAN NOTABILITIES

IN the Armenian quarter of Cæsarea a house of imposing appearance stands in a shady garden, and its reception-rooms are magnificently furnished in a mixture of styles, half European and half Oriental. There lived a rich Armenian merchant, who enjoyed great influence, not only in his own class, but also in Ottoman official circles in the entire *sanjak* of Cæsarea. He was on friendly terms with the Governor of the *vilayet* of Angora, and had the *mutessarif* and several of the *kaimakams* completely under his thumb. His wide influence in this world of officials was owing to his readiness to lend money, and his liberal use of *bakshish*. In this way he served his own interests, and gained a hold over the Sultan's officials, by whose aid he made short work of those among the Armenian merchants who had the audacity to compete with him. By his insatiable greed and intense and covetous desire to possess the wealth of others, he was the cause of widespread ruin. A whole series of merchants were reckoned among his victims, some of whom had formerly been men of fortune. He had purchased

from the Government the right of farming the taxes in several *vilayets*, and he gained upon this four or five times the price he paid into the State Treasury every year. His numerous flocks and herds and horses were spread like clouds over the pastures and hillsides. He was the proprietor of large estates in several *vilayets*. There were branches of his house of business in almost every large town in Asia Minor, and he was in constant relations with foreign countries, and with the Capital. The power of riches had given him undisputed influences and authority over all the men and the affairs of his country, and he well knew how to profit by it. He was a member of different official institutions, particularly of the *Idaré*, where he had a preponderating influence ; and also of the City Council of Armenians, where his word was, practically, law.

In the posts of "representatives" of the Armenian churches in the city, and of the *sanjak* of Cæsarea, he had caused certain merchants of his own choosing to be placed ; and he kept them in a state of dependence. Many societies and every scholastic, ecclesiastical, or lay personage of the neighbourhood depended upon him for their existence, and were prosperous or perished according to his decree. From time to time he gave large sums to the Moham-medan schools, in order to win the sympathy of the Mussulman ecclesiastics. It was said that he had bequeathed fabulous sums for the benefit of "the nation," for the building of a large church, and the founding of several schools, as well as to pay off the debt of the Armenian Convent of Jerusalem, also to benefit the patriarchate of Con-

stantinople, and to endow various national associations, of which he was an honorary member. In the patriarch's council his voice decided national questions, as well as every local question that affected Cæsarea, or any other district in which his interest might be involved. A crowd of ecclesiastics, officials, merchants, lawyers, doctors, and schoolmasters, toadies and parasites of every description, swarmed like ants about him, flattering him and displaying their awe of him in every way, lying in wait for him, following his footsteps, fearing his every motion, his wrath, and even his gloom. And this court of his had already named and proclaimed him "The great national benefactor." Several Armenian newspapers in Constantinople never missed a chance of setting the "Master's" name beside those of the greatest philanthropists of his nation or of humanity. Very often, indeed, his name headed the entire list of philanthropists, and was paraded with sounding phrases, extravagant praises and glorifications, especially when the golden recompense weighed the scale down more heavily than usual. In the so-called "Armenian National Assembly" at Constantinople, there were some "deputies," who, for a fixed sum, rendered him all manner of service, and played the parts of energetic lawyers, orators, or patriots, according as their master required. More than once, on the occasion of State festivities, he had offered gifts of exceptional value to the Sultan, as his most loyal and humble subject.

When he walked about the streets of Cæsarea, his tall sinewy figure was head and shoulders above the crowd and upright still, in spite of his sixty

years ; his great eyes, under scowling eyebrows, shone strangely as he glanced sternly and arrogantly about him, while his face wore an air of constant preoccupation. Persons of the middle and working classes meekly made way for him, cursing him inwardly the while for the ruin of hundreds of families, whilst the members of the upper and educated classes greeted him deferentially. As for him, he saw no one, he greeted no one, perhaps he forgot that his father had been only a simple artisan, who had bowed low before the rich men of his day, just like that old Mathos, of fourscore years, whom he knew well, and who always saluted him so humbly. He had almost forgotten his early days, when he was a mere clerk, employed by the brother of this very Mathos, the richest merchant of his day, in the same town. He rarely recalled the curse uttered by the rich man on his death-bed against his *employé*, then about thirty years of age, for gaining his master's confidence at first, in order to ruin him afterwards. But when he came upon Mathos, a living reminder of the past, his expression changed horribly, and he quickened his steps.

He was seated that day in his reception-room, in the company of several guests. Two of them were rich merchants of the town, the third a business man in a large way from another *vilayet*, who was passing through the town, and the fourth was an Archimandrite of a certain convent in the *sanjak* of Cæsarea.

"I tell you we shall all be ruined if we don't put a stop to the doings of these agitators," said the host gravely.

"No doubt of it! . . . Certainly! . . . You're right there, Arakel *agha*, you're right!" chimed in several voices.

"1890, 1891, 1892," counted Arakel *agha*, "and we are now in 1893; that makes four or five years that we have been victimised by these damned rascals. Our trade is at a standstill, we can't earn our bread because of them! The whole country is upside-down, finance is utterly disorganised, and we suffer serious losses"

"The blessing of God preserve *you* from ill-fortune, Arakel *agha*," said the Archimandrite in a solemn voice, and addressing the others, he added: "My blessing on you also," and continuing, he said: "You are all, and Arakel *agha* particularly, the anchor of this country, you are our honour and glory; and, thanks to your watchful care and your well-directed and powerful efforts, I doubt not that your wise, patriotic aims will be crowned with success."

"Amen!" said several voices

"Yes, there is no doubt that steps should be taken, as Arakel *agha* says," remarked the non-resident merchant, who was less in awe of his host than the others. "And yet," he paused—"and yet, there is another aspect to the question, which we must not leave out of consideration. It is true, as you say, Arakel *agha*, that commerce is declining in our country . . . certainly it is in a state of decline, and especially of late; but when was it ever in a flourishing state? You are right, no doubt, about the state of our affairs, the fluctuating and unsettled condition of the money market, and of property. But you must allow that it was much the same in

former years. Ever since the war with Russia, the situation of our country has changed from bad to worse; its debts have gone on increasing, till the Treasury is empty—that's the state of things from an official point of view. From our own point of view, agriculture, which was paralysed before, is ruined now, so that, as a matter of fact, the money collected by the Government in taxes is scarcely sufficient to pay the salaries of the officials."

"The officials merely get a nominal salary, Guévork *agha*," interrupted Arakel *agha*, rather severely.

"Very true, very true," assented Guévork *agha*, and added in the tone of a loyal subject: "as to that, the affairs of the Government are not my business. . . . I don't go into that" And he glanced deprecatingly at Arakel *agha*, who kept his eyes fixed on the floor.

"These agitators have gone beyond all bounds, you are right there," said Guévork *agha*, with a change of tone, after a short silence. "If I had your influence and your power, I would easily keep them within bounds!"

"Just so; you can do the same thing in your own district," said Arakel *agha*, raising his voice and speaking with his usual rude familiarity.

Guévork *agha* was disconcerted.

"But why should I enter upon such an undertaking all alone?" he stammered. "I should have a poor life of it ever after. I should be an object of hatred to the agitators . . . they would kill me as an enemy."

"God forbid! May He hear my prayer for you on

High!" said the unctuous voice of the Archimandrite, whilst the other merchants shuddered.

"They dare not!" almost shouted Arakel *agha*,^{*} red with fury.

A silence followed. It was June, and a gentle west wind passed over the garden; the windows were open, and the whole room was filled with the warm and delicate fragrance of flowers. At that moment a swallow skimmed past the window with a shrill cry. The sunbeams slanting through the curtains made a dusty, golden column on the floor.

"Life is very pleasant," murmured Guévork *agha*, as the breeze fanned his face gently.

"But they want to poison our lives, the wretches!" cried Arakel *agha* again.

Amidst the general approbation, Guévork *agha* resumed: "No doubt, no doubt . . . but since the war there are some things the Government might do for us—the commercial class, I mean, who are loyal to it—and the conditions of our commerce and industries might be greatly improved."

Guévork *agha* paused, and glanced at Arakel *agha*. He had the same sombre visage, the same downcast eyes. Guévork *agha* continued:

"Could we not conciliate the Government, and petition for the right of exploiting the rich mines of our country, with the minimum of taxation? Then roads ought to be opened up . . . that is a necessity, both for the mines and for trade generally. We have no means of transit. A few years ago some French, English, or was it German, Company wanted to make a railway from Samsoon southwards through the country. At first the Government were going to

consent, and exact a heavy payment, but they refused afterwards. Of course it's their own affair . . . they have the right to decide," he added timidly, "but, all the same, the condition of the country would have been improved, trade would have been more flourishing, the price of land would have gone up, and more money would have been in circulation."

Guévork *agha* ceased speaking.

Arakel *agha* still kept his thoughtful attitude.

"What Guévork *agha* says is true," another merchant said rather shyly, addressing Arakel *agha* indirectly; and, turning towards the first speaker, he cried: "It's all very well, but how is the Government to be conciliated? These agitators have made them to lose all confidence in us. They think that we well-to-do folk back them with our money. Only last week that respectable merchant Sénékérime *agha* was arrested and clapped into prison, on the charge of giving money to the *fessatjis* (revolutionaries), and he only escaped by the skin of his teeth on payment of four hundred and fifty Turkish *livres*. But God Almighty knows that none of the present company has ever given a farthing, and never will, to this wicked 'rising generation.'"

He paused quite out of breath, being unused to making such a long speech, and all the time, though he addressed Guévork *agha*, he never took his eye off Arakel *agha*. He tried to gather from his host's expression the effect which his words were producing, and he laid special emphasis upon those phrases that seemed to be congenial to that sombre visage.

"You speak very aptly," growled Arakel *agha* in an indulgent tone, and relapsed into silence again. This

was his way ; he spoke slowly, in meaning tones, often laying stress upon the most insignificant words ; he loved to linger over his words in order to secure the full attention of those around him. He valued his own judgment highly, and his weakness was to consider himself an orator. His conviction had become firmly rooted ever since the day when he had read the following passage from an Armenian newspaper in Constantinople concerning himself : "Weighty utterances drop from his lips like strung pearls."

"You all speak very justly," he resumed slowly and seriously. "But Michael *agha* asks an apt question," and again he stopped and glanced at the merchant who had spoken after Guévork *agha*.

Michael *agha's* little eyes shone, and his whole face, the face of a handsome, well-preserved man of fifty, lighted up with pleasure.

"Michael *agha* asks how we are to conciliate the Government. Well, I am going to tell you, so listen to me. Now you say that our affairs are thus and thus, that we have no high road, nor the right to exploit our mines the money being lacking. But you listen to me ! we have always been like this ; the nation has always been in the same case ; but has that prevented it from having merchant princes hitherto ? Does it follow that the nation is in such a bad way because the Government won't do this or that for us ?"

And he went on to explain at length that for centuries the Armenian nation had patiently endured life under the same sort of conditions, and that there was no reason to change these conditions at the

present day And although he tried his best to make out that the economic conditions of the country were satisfactory, he only succeeded in strengthening the arguments of Guévork *agha* He made great use of the word "nation," but according to him it apparently meant the commercial classes, or even Arakel *agha* himself In firm and resolute tones he declared the absolute necessity of being on good terms with the Government and that the "nation" ought to prove its loyalty Fools and madmen must not be allowed to irritate the *padishah* and embroil matters After all the Armenian nation was but a very small part of the Ottoman Empire, and must wait patiently until such time as the Government saw fit to improve by intelligent measures the state of trade and communications, and to finance the country

"And, besides, several commissions have already been formed with this object in view," he added in respectful tones On the other hand, the Armenian "nation" ought to strive to acquire the financial and material power of the country through the medium of men of wealth and influence "The nation" ought to aim at controlling the material wealth of the Empire, and thus, by degrees, and by the exercise of force and patience, to gain a unique and influential position Finally he hinted, from the point of view of his own case, that it was not difficult for a capable man to fight his way up to a high position But with that his face grew suddenly dark By some strange association of ideas he suddenly bethought him of the meek, dejected face of old Mathos, and the humble air of the crowd that made way for him but cursed him all the while for causing the ruin of hundreds of

his fellows. He was quite aware of the sentiment of the crowd, and Mathos was a living reminder of his crime. And at that thought he grew angry, and broke out :

"Yes, we owe it to the nation and the state," he cried, bringing his fist down on his knee. "We must bind these agitators hand and foot, and give them up to the Government to pay the just penalty of their crimes. It is these wretches that are the plague of commerce. It is the duty of all of us to spy out these madmen, these fools, we ought to report to Government all that we hear or see or know concerning them. Even if it were one's own child one ought to hand him over to the authorities," he added rather thickly, recalling an only son of his own, a lad of two-and-twenty

"We have the closest financial ties with the Government," he added after a pause; "indeed it owes us large sums, and it is by no means to our interest that its position should be an uncertain one, and all the country in a state of disturbance, owing to these damned fools!"

He broke off, and a silence fell upon the room. There was a general feeling of uneasiness, and no one raised their eyes or wished to be the first speaker. There was an unusual weight upon the breasts of these men. The shadow of something shameful and impure was upon their dark and melancholy faces.

"Why don't you speak?" cried Arakel *agha* in the silence.

There was general embarrassment.

"I believe I must have met one of these fools in our

town," said Guévork *agha* awkwardly ; he felt curiously ill at ease. "It was some weeks ago. 'It's your rich folk,' said he, 'that have driven the nation on the road to ruin by usury, by shameful manipulation of finance, by cheating, by exploiting and ruining the peasants, by your commercial dealings,' so he said, 'and in everything else, you are nothing but monopolists, vampires sucking the life out of the people. You crawl slavishly before the Government, you make common cause with it against your nation,' so he said, 'you are traitors and cowards, nothing is sacred to you except your gold. Those were his very words, and he said many other horrible things. He told me"

But Arakel *agha*, out of all patience, became really furious at last.

"Quick, quick ! let us give up this dangerous man, this enemy of the nation, to the Government. . . . Quick, quick !" and he leapt up from his place, trembling all over with rage

But just at this moment a light step was heard, and a young man of thirty entered the room. He was under-sized, dressed in the latest fashion, with a sleek, vulgar face ; the ends of his moustaches were twisted and waxed, and a humble ingratiating smile hovered perpetually upon his lips

"Arakel *agha* is in the right, to be sure," he put in, as he bowed to every one. He had only heard a fragment of the conversation. "Arakel *agha* is in the right as usual, and I, his devoted secretary, will bet you a hundred pounds that my chief will not make a single error in judgment." He pronounced each word separately, using phrases and accentuation quite

foreign to the Armenian, and intended to resemble the French language.

"Shall I tell you the latest news?" he asked, addressing Arakel *agha*, while he applied a cambric handkerchief to his moustache. "Very well, here goes: Sérobé *agha* has just been declared bankrupt."

Every one exclaimed in surprise except Arakel *agha*.

"Sérobé *agha*?" repeated the Archimandrite, "And I had intended to pay him a visit to-day! However, that won't be necessary now," he added, a little disconcerted at the news which cut off a possible donation from the subscription list of the Convent.

"Yes, Sérobé *agha*," replied the young man

"Is this certain, Sédrak?" asked Arakel *agha*, with an indifferent air

"Yes, perfectly certain. . . . Besides, there have been rumours current of this failure for some time . . . and, you know, that in itself is enough to bring it about. Public opinion can be manufactured, and of course that has a critical influence, one way or another, on a man's fortunes. I foresaw this failure long ago, and I told you so. I concealed my gloomy apprehensions from nobody. . . . I mentioned the matter to my chief, and I am happy to say we were just in time to realise the money (a good round sum, too) that we had lent to Sérobé a year ago, and I assure you we did not lose a farthing of interest either."

Sédrak was the son of a Constantinople merchant. In the year 1880 he had entered one of those pretentious Armenian schools in Constantinople, which

are mere frauds. He left after eight years, having, like almost all the other pupils of that school, learnt practically nothing, possibly owing to the stupid methods in vogue and the notorious incapacity of the masters. This, however, had been no obstacle to his obtaining a diploma, certifying that he had completed his studies with credit ; and, armed with this document, he departed to Paris, where, though he entered his name on the registers of the *Ecole de Droit*, he never opened a book. He had for four or five years given himself up entirely to a life of frivolity, distraction, dissipation, and squandering of money. On his return to Constantinople, garrulous, empty-headed, and frivolous as he was, his conversation soon brought him success in certain so-called "patriotic" circles ; he was very popular with women, too, and before long he was received with open arms as member of a journalistic staff. He wrote numbers of articles, touching on every subject imaginable in extravagant phrases, and in a jargon utterly unintelligible and devoid of meaning. He posed in turn as critic, artist, politician, poet, pedagogue, linguist, and historian. He wrote several novelettes and poems in a pretentious style, flowery and diffuse, full of false rhetoric, and often of juggling sentimentalism, but without a trace of real skill, except possibly that of an expert polisher of fine empty phrases destitute alike of sense, fancy, feeling, and truth. The most celebrated literary men of the Capital overwhelmed him with eulogies, for which they received the equivalent in kind, hailed him as a "genius of a new order," which was, perhaps, true enough. But all his fame and genius had not hindered Sédrak from

yielding to the desire of his father, a well-to-do merchant of the Capital, and becoming secretary to Arakel *agha*, with whom his father had business relations. His father had exerted himself to the utmost to obtain this position for his son, for the unheard-of development of Arakel *agha's* financial power was a source of alarm to him, especially of late years, when the market of Constantinople threatened to pass more and more under the control of the Croesus of Cæsarea.

"Sédrak," he said to his son on the day of his departure, "you are going to Cæsarea, and you are a sensible fellow with all your wits about you. I trust before long you will have gained the entire confidence of Arakel *agha*, and keep me informed of all his secret affairs; and, further, that you will act in accordance with my advice, without letting Arakel *agha* have the faintest inkling of it."

"You can reckon on me, father. . . . I understand perfectly, and will manage things all right."

And he had carried out his promise faithfully.

Half an hour later, as Arakel *agha* took leave of his guests, he repeated once more :

"And so, Guévork *agha*, I advise you to hand that brigand over to the authorities;" and, turning to the Archimandrite, he said: "and my advice to you, father, is to be faithful to the divine precepts, and preach to the people an unswerving loyalty to the Government, and the duty of delivering all the traitors into the hands of the authorities."

"God help us! it is our sacred duty," the Archimandrite replied in a tone of assumed modesty.

"I have some very important news for you, Arakel

agha," Sédrak said, in a mysterious tone, approaching the master of the house directly the guests had gone.

"Is it about my son?"

And although Arakel *agha* showed his impatience, the other only nodded and remained silent.

"Well," said Arakel *agha* impatiently, "what is it?"

"I have been making the closest investigations, as you directed me to do," and he relapsed into silence again.

Arakel *agha's* face betrayed his torture.

"Well, speak then, speak!"

After a brief silence, Sédrak said in a solemn voice: "I am in a position to assert to you on my word of honour that your son is a member of a revolutionary group"

Arakel *agha* stepped back abruptly, and, without uttering a sound, sank into a chair, completely overwhelmed.

Sédrak remained mute and grave

"I suspected as much," Arakel *agha* groaned, after a short silence.

"Yes, unhappily, your suspicions were only too well founded, and if the truth about your son were publicly known, rumours might come to the ears of the authorities, and then . . ."

"Well, what then?" Arakel *agha* cried uneasily.

"Well, you know better than I do," said the other coldly; "it would mean ruin to you."

"Ruin?"

"Do you imagine it could end in any other way? At present it is our secret. You are fully aware of my real attachment and absolute fidelity to you;

this secret will rest between us, and so we may avert disaster. But the necessary measures must be taken against your son. You will allow me to say so, on account of the close friendship you have with my father, and the filial affection I feel for you as for a second father."

He stopped. With bowed head, staring eyes, and gloomy face, Arakel *agha* remained mute.

"You have no alternative, allow me to say, but to give up your son to the authorities."

Arakel *agha* raised his head sharply, and fastened his troubled eyes, drowned in melancholy, on Sédrak.

"Give up . . . my son?" he exclaimed, after a brief interval, as though he had only then caught an echo of his secretary's words. And suddenly getting up from his chair, he began to pace the room, a prey to inward agitation

"Unless, indeed, you prefer your own ruin," the other pursued coldly

Some minutes of silence followed.

"I must tell you he is the most influential member of this group. I know another member of it also, Sissak, the son of a poor old workman."

Arakel *agha*, standing in the middle of the room, questioned him with a look.

The other went on cynically: "And if this Sissak himself should be arrested, he might, under torture, reveal your son's name too."

Arakel *agha* remained mute, overwhelmed and distracted; he hardly seemed to understand what he heard.

"Moreover, it is preferable, and even necessary, that your son should be given up by you . . . it is only in

that way that you give the authorities a sufficient guarantee of your entire loyalty, and escape the calamity that threatens your life, your fortune, and your honour."

This time Arakel *agha* felt that he had received his death-blow.

"Listen," he said gravely, in a husky voice, "let me think: keep the secret go on to the office . . . I will come."

When he was left alone he fell back in his chair, crushed, shattered, with staring eyes and absorbed in the blackest of thoughts. Silence lay heavily on everything, no sound came from without but the whispered sighing in the leaves of the Eastern plane-tree, which rose tall and stately before his windows. The soft wind filled the room with a sweet, warm fragrance; the curtains fluttered gently to and fro, and the sunshine made its dusty golden column on the floor. And the silence was only broken from time to time by the muffled sobbing of a woman in the next room.

CHAPTER VII

PUNISHMENT

ALL the following week Arakel *agha* seemed gloomier than his wont. He spoke very little, received no one into his house, and stayed up at night, sitting for long hours together on his sofa, which was covered with a rich Persian *tapestry*. Out of doors he walked, absorbed and listless, with his eyes on the ground, speaking to no one, and not even greeting those to whom, a week before, he would have thought it essential to be attentive. He lost his temper more frequently and more easily than ever, and got furious with his clerks, two of whom, in a moment of rage, he dismissed. On the same day, he had met the *mutessarif* almost directly in front of that gentleman's palace, and the official's friendly greetings were received mechanically. Arakel *agha* listened for a full quarter of an hour to a long story of the *mutessarif's*, relating to a pretty Armenian peasant girl, who had been carried off by his men, and was now in his harem. He listened with a pre-occupied air, his thoughts were far away, but they were always arrested by one subject, which had haunted him for a week. The *mutessarif*, a man of

low intelligence, whose life was simply one of sensual enjoyment, barely noticed the change that had come over Arakel *agha*. He stopped a few minutes longer with him, laughed a great deal, and talked no less, making several racy jokes, and chaffed Arakel *agha* on his age. At last, quite out of breath, the little man strutted off, followed by two *saptiés*. The other answered him in monosyllables, smiled once or twice, or grimaced, and said "Good-bye," but all mechanically as though he were in a trance, while the *mutessarif's* mellow baritone was still ringing in his ears. Rooted to the same spot for some moments, he followed the retreating figure of the *mutessarif* with his eyes, and then, with an abrupt movement, he went on a little, but soon stopped again, with his head bent on his breast, motionless, as though pondering something very deeply. At last he turned sharply round, and, with a hasty step, he made his way homewards.

The whole town, which always kept an observant eye on its Cræsus, was beginning to talk of the sudden change in him, and of his taciturn air. The strangest and most contradictory rumours were afloat concerning him. Some people asserted that he was ill; others declared he was losing his reason; others opined that he had had heavy losses in business; while some bold spirits among his fellow-merchants went so far as to announce for a fact that he was on the verge of bankruptcy.

That very morning Sédrak had acquainted him with the rumour of his approaching failure. Then several business men came into his office, one after another, and gave him to understand that they were

in urgent need of the various sums they had placed with him, and would be glad to settle up accounts. Arakel *agha* patiently heard them out in silence; he then promptly counted out the money with a nervous hand, flung it down before them, and, suddenly getting angry, he half shouted.

"Let me never see your face or your money again. . . . Begone!"

But after the departure of the merchants he was beset by the darkest apprehensions. He felt failure hanging over him, saw himself ruined lost, the object of general ridicule. At that moment he glanced from under his eyebrows at Sédrak seated at his desk . . . who knows? Perhaps that excellent young man had not uttered the worst of his fears! For it was possible that Arakel *agha* was to spend his last days in a foul dungeon! . . . Abruptly he rose, and went silently and resolutely out of the office. A few moments later he was walking hurriedly along the street in the direction of the *mutessarif's* palace. But as he got nearer his steps slackened and became hesitating, his hands trembled visibly; there was a vacant look in his eyes, and they had a bewildered expression. . . . At last, owing to an inward conflict which he could not master, he stopped short in the middle of the street, almost facing the palace. He was almost desperate.

"Ah, my dear Arakel *agha*, what an honour to meet you here!" cried the *mutessarif*, coming from the other direction. . . . And then he had to listen to the gossip of the great official, and, on parting from him, turned his face towards home.

There, at that unusual hour, he was not expected, and on going into the drawing-room he saw his wife sitting on the sofa, her eyes full of tears. Suddenly the blood rushed to his head, a frenzy of rage seized him.

"What are you crying for there?" he shouted, standing stiffly in the doorway.

The woman was startled. She got up quickly, sobbing, and trembling all over.

"What are you crying for?" Arakel *agha* shouted again, and, with bloodshot eyes and clenched fists, he advanced some paces towards his wife with a fierce and threatening air. But, as though suddenly tugged back by some one, he halted abruptly, his wild eyes fastened on his wife, who still sobbed, her face hidden in her handkerchief.

"What are you crying for?" he repeated the third time, and all at once he shivered, feeling that his fearful secret was shared by his wife. What! did she know everything? Did she know her son's fate was hanging on a thread? He, great man though he was, felt for a moment as a thief may be supposed to feel who has been caught in the very act of picking a neighbour's pocket. He began to lose his head. A rattle was heard in his throat as he struggled in vain to speak. The intense anguish he had suppressed for a whole week at last broke from him in shouts of angry rage. Half-maddened, and urged by an irresistible fury of vengeance, he sprang wildly at his wife, and brought down the whole weight of his clenched fist upon her. She uttered a shriek, and fell back upon the sofa.

"What's the meaning of these sobs, I ask you?"

What's it for?" shouted Arakel *agha*, beside himself with frenzy, and shaking from head to foot. "What's the matter with you? . . . What are you crying for? . . . Is your husband dead? . . . or your son?" and at this last word, which fell involuntarily from his lips, Arakel turned pale, his hands relaxed, he stood as though turned to stone, and his blood-shot eyes, fixed on his wife, glittered with unshed tears.

The silence lasted some time, broken only by their irregular, gasping breath.

"Arakel . . ." came at last the woman's voice, at once plaintive, defiant, and fearful, and she raised herself on the sofa and gazed upon her husband with the marvellous, sweet look of her great eyes, in whose dark depths something flashed like the gleam of starlight on the black night sky. "Arakel . . ." she said again, in an imploring voice, and her delicate, waxen nostrils twitched, and her lips quivered—she had rather full lips, like a child's, and the white teeth gleamed between them—"Arakel . . . I know all," she faltered. And the man, as though suddenly awakened by a violent shock, shuddered and recoiled.

"What do you know? . . . what do you know?" Arakel *agha* asked fiercely. "Whatever you do know, Gohar, keep it to yourself," he added awkwardly a moment later, and in his excitement he fell to striding up and down the drawing-room with his arms crossed behind him.

"Arakel," Gohar began again with rather more courage, "I am a woman of forty, and no longer an ignorant girl . . . I am no fool . . . I know of every-

thing that goes on in my house. . . . The other day, a week ago, when your guests had gone out of this room, I was just coming in to speak to you . . . but all at once I heard Sédrak's voice. . . . I was there, behind the door—unable to move . . . and I heard everything . . . everything." And Gohar's head sank once more upon her breast.

Arakel *agha* continued to pace the room. As his wife spoke, his steps became more nervous, more unequal, more hurried.

"Arakel," Gohar besought him, 'we have but one child, one son . . . what would become of us if he were arrested, if he were lost? . . . For whom are you amassing your fortune? Not simply for the glitter of the gold. . . . Arakel, ah! say nothing to the authorities. . . . What should we do afterwards? Is there any prayer in the world could save our polluted souls after that? . . . Have pity on your poor boy . . . my Nicoghos, my sorrow, the light of my eyes . . . I beseech you not to do it!"

And the wife implored her husband, the mother strained every nerve to save her child. She promised to reform him, to bring him back to the path of duty, to be ever at his side to keep him from associating with the wicked people who had perverted him. But as she spoke, Arakel *agha* grew more and more impatient, he made gestures of denial, walked on, and stopped again, his face working, his foot stamping on the floor.

"Very well, there is nothing left for me if my son is arrested but to strangle myself!" cried Gohar in a firm, determined voice.

Arakel *agha* was suddenly exasperated. "Silence,

woman! Your hair is long indeed, as the proverb says, but your sense is short. . . . Your son is a criminal. . . . Your son will be the ruin of my house, my honour, my name. . . . By to-morrow the Government will confiscate all my wealth . . . and that . . . that . . . that . . . brigand, by his shameful deeds, will tear my fortune from me with my life. . . . No, no! I cannot face such a blow. . . . Shall I permit my enemies, through the medium of the authorities, to carry off all I possess to-morrow—I who to-day could wipe them off the face of the earth, every one of them? No, I say no! . . . Now, this very instant, I will go straight to the *mutessarif* . . . and . . . I will tell him all!" And he shouted, yelled, gesticulated, continually repeating the same phrases, the same words, threatening to give up his son, bound hand and foot, threatening to denounce as revolutionaries all the enemies who were plotting his ruin; to annihilate every one and every thing that robbed him of his tranquillity—every thing that annoyed him, or that was even merely in his way.

"Arakel, Arakel, you are raving! . . . It is you, you yourself, who are bringing ruin on your house, on your fortune. . . . Calm yourself, let your brain get clear again. Arakel, think what you are doing with your son, your own flesh and blood!"

"Enough!" cried Arakel, threatening her with his fists again. . . . "Enough, enough, I tell you, or I will beat your head in!"

"Crush me, kill me!" cried Gohar, quite beside herself. "Crush me, I tell you. If you can denounce your son, it will be easy enough for you to kill your wife!"

"Denounce?" thundered Arakel *agha* ironically, . . . "no, not denounce him . . . but punish him, see justice done—yes, justice!" and with a hard, heartless laugh, he ran towards the door, ran the length of the hall, and violently flung open the street door.

"Arakel! . . . Arakel! . . . oh, listen! . . . I have something to tell you! . . . Wait . . . don't do it! don't do it!" cried Gohar despairingly, running after her husband into the hall, where she sank down, sobbing

In the course of the same morning, people passing to and fro in a dirty, narrow street in the town heard piercing shrieks coming from the police-station there. And when they neared the place, Armenians quickened their steps and fled, their hearts full of apprehension.

"There are some *fessatjis* being tortured there," said one man to another in Turkish, as they passed by.

"Serve them right they are faithless to our *padishah*, the cur!" the other rejoined. "I'd have them burned alive if I had my way!"

"Shed the blood of the *giaours*, and so you shall reach *Jenneth**—such is the commandment of the great Prophet."

Here they stopped before a shoemaker's shop, and one of the two, pointing to the man who sat cobbling shoes within, remarked:

"I make better shoes than he does . . . but the beast of a *giaour* takes away my custom."

* Paradise.

"Go your way and leave me in peace," said the shoemaker.

"Will you leave us in peace, you *giaour*? Do you know that for saying that you should meet with a proper punishment, dog that you are!" cried one of the Mohammedans.

"I said nothing to you," stammered the shoemaker. . . . "I tell you you're trampling my leather under your feet. . . ."

"Your own leather may be trampled under our feet some day, infidel pig!"

And, chuckling and swearing at the shoemaker, the two Mussulmans moved noisily away.

At that moment the door of the police-station opened, and a young man was led out, escorted by four *saptiés*. It was Sissak.

He had to perambulate the streets, and at each step the *saptiés* asked him if he did not recognise among the passers-by some revolutionaries of his acquaintance. And while the piercing shrieks from the police-station reached the adjoining street, Sissak pointed out a young man who chanced to be passing at the moment.

"I knew him, he is a revolutionist," he faltered, and the young man was arrested on the spot, and led off to the police-station.

And up till five o'clock in the afternoon this little procession of treachery went its destructive round. More than ten persons during that time were denounced by Sissak. Yet, by reason of some odd, unaccountable sentiment, he did not betray a single member of the principal revolutionary group of the town, of which he was himself a member. Not long

before, still escorted by the *sapits*, he had come upon Nicoghos himself. Their eyes met. Sissak felt himself grow red, he dropped his eyes, and some thirty paces further on he pointed out another person, who was promptly seized.

The night was dark and silent, under a starless sky, covered all over with a faint film of cloud, when Sissak was released. Once in the street, and alone, his first thought was that he was free now, that now he could think of his paralysed father, his mother and sisters and brothers; that now his family, all of whom were in great poverty, would have a little bread to eat, for a time at least, until he could get work to do. . . . Yes, he could provide for his people for some months. . . . Provide for them? How? With the money he had received from the police in reward for the information he had given . . . Information? . . . What information? . . . He had denounced them, betrayed them! . . . betrayed his comrades in the struggle! . . . For the first time since the morning he was aware of burning remorse. Was he really so vile? Had he fallen so low? . . . There were others at the police-station who had endured, under his very eyes, the most fearful tortures, and yet they had not uttered a sentence, not a word, that was anything like a betrayal; whilst he . . . He quickened his steps. . . . The darkness of the night reassured him. He looked furtively about him. He saw no one. He was alone. . . . How good it was to be alone! Like an assassin who has just committed his crime, Sissak went by with every sense on the alert, at once timorous and resolute, glaring into the darkness, a fugitive from all things, desiring above all to be lost,

to be swallowed up in darkness. And he stole along by the streets of houses, by the walls and gardens. From time to time it seemed to him that he could make out a faint sound of footsteps, a whisper at his ear, a shadow in pursuit of him. And he stopped short, listened breathlessly. Nothing, nothing. . . . He was alone. . . . And, trembling all over, his teeth chattering, with a nervous, jerky action he continued to walk on, and whither should he fly? To fly from something he had left behind him . . . there, in the police-station. To fly from something which at times sent a stab of pain to his heart and spoke to his conscience with a dull reproach. . . . And an intense sound, something like piercing shrieks, kept echoing in his ears, his heart beat as if it would break, his sight failed him, in the darkness he grew dizzy, and suddenly he stopped, scarcely daring to breathe. Some moments after he was hastening on again. . . . Sometimes he struck his foot against a stone, and, seized with terror, he fell back a few steps, thinking he had come upon some unseen obstacle. Twice he heard the ring of metal, and fancied he could see a dagger flashing above his head. . . . Once more the same sound set him shuddering; he realised that it was the gold coins rattling in his pocket. . . . Coin? . . . Where did he get it? And he felt the blood rush to his head, and flood his face, and then ebb back to his heart, setting it throbbing violently, while his face felt suddenly chill. . . . If it had only been the chill of the grave! . . . And with a hasty gesture he took all the money from his pocket, and made as though he would fling it on the ground. But some one might hear the chink—the clear, shrill chink of

the gold, and as he slackened his steps he thought he would lay it gently on the ground. He bent down to do it, but suddenly it seemed to him that some one was pulling him by the elbow. . . . He straightened himself instantly and ran on a few steps, stuffing the pieces of gold instinctively into his pocket. And again he fled, gliding along the street between the rows of houses, the dumb walls, the gardens full of murmured sounds—on, on, into the depths of the darkness. . . .

Half an hour passed by. He was by now in the Armenian quarter, and everything he had been feeling before, here, on this familiar ground, waxed more intense and terrifying. His heart felt as heavy as a stone; there was a strangling lump in his throat. He could hardly keep back the cry which rose to his lips—an irresistible, agonising cry. . . . "Traitor! traitor!" . . . voices kept humming in his ear, and it seemed to him that on every side hundreds of people were pointing at him, cursing him, glaring at him with eyes of hatred and revenge. . . .

Under the black sky, the dwellings of the Armenians lay scattered all about him, silent, sullen, and death-like. . . . "The sorrows of thy race!" flashed through the mind of Sissak . . . and at the same instant, as he walked along under a wall, he suddenly sprang aside into the middle of the street. Everything was eloquent, everything alert, the still houses, the dumb walls, and the stones in them. . . . They watched him, spoke to him, vowing to keep for long years the memory of his crime. "Traitor! Traitor!" he heard on every side; it seemed as if the darkness that he sought had eyes, the solitude

speech. . . . And bewildered and seized with a sudden panic, he fell at a wild gallop to rushing from the walls into the middle of the street, and then back again to the walls, sometimes stumbling and falling on his knees, and again tearing onwards, onwards into the darkness that evaded him. . . . And as in his wild flight, scared and breathless, he turned the corner of his street, he suddenly fell back and stood frozen to the spot.

"Stop! If you utter a sound, I'll kill you!" an ominous voice commanded in the darkness, and at the same time several persons laid hold of Sissak's arms.

"Do you know us?" demanded the same voice.

Sissak uttered not a word. He realised everything. He had the sensation of a condemned man at the scaffold.

"Confess that you are a traitor?" he heard in the same voice.

A short silence followed, in which the beating of Sissak's heart could be distinctly heard.

"I confess it," the dull, faint answer came.

"Confess that you have denounced numbers of persons and also delivered up papers; confess that you have been guilty of the basest, vilest crime against the people." Silence again, and a few moments later again the same faint, trembling voice:

"I confess it."

"Do you know," the strange voice began again, and this time in graver accents still, "do you know that you took the oath of fidelity to the people, the Cause, the Party, the crusade? Do you know that you have betrayed all, and that you must wipe out this crime with death?"

The vision of death, inclement and imperious, rose before Sissak's eyes. Great drops of cold sweat stood on his guilty brow. A deep groan broke from his breast. The sword of implacable punishment hung over his head. A black and terrible silence weighed upon every one and everything around. At last a whisper, hardly more than a breath, replied :

"I know"

At that word in the darkness a sigh was heard that could not be repressed. "No, he's no brother of mine. . . no!" moaned this unknown voice. "Wretched boy, you have given our name to shame for ever," and the voice trembled to tears.

Sissak shuddered, he had just recognised his brother, hidden from him in the darkness. But the first voice, now hollow and shaken, as if it came from the tombs, spoke again gravely.

"Kill yourself," and a dagger was held out to Sissak.

The condemned man softly pushed the weapon away.

"Strike the blow!" he faltered, half-dead already.

In the darkness of the night the death-like silence was broken by a doleful groan, and something fell heavily to the earth.

Slowly the night advanced. The town lay sleeping in the torpor of weariness. Several minarets rose, straight and tall like black pillars, towering over the roofs of the houses. Here and there in the dark sky a few stars pierced the clouds, and with an uncertain glimmer like many distant fires from another world. The leafy trees in the garden slumbered, motionless ;

and the plane-trees with whispering leaves waved their proud, pointed tops softly against the sky, as in greeting to the rare stars.

Gohar was not yet asleep; she stood at the open window, listening in the silence to each faint sound that seemed to reach her ears. Not Nicoghos? No, he was not coming! And she fell to pacing uneasily up and down her room, then flung herself on the bed, and buried her burning face in the pillows. . . . Some moments passed, and again she went to the window, again she listened intently. The mysterious silence weighed upon her, adding to her distress, and she only heard the furious beating of her heart. Ah, how she longed to press her boy's dear head to her suffering, loving heart! And the tears rose to her eyes. . . . She picked up something from a table and put it down again in a different place; once or twice she came against a chair and sank into it wearily, her eyes fixed dreamily. And as she remained so for some time, the image of her son rose vividly before her mind. She tried to get up, but as though held in the chair by some unseen power, she could not force herself to move. Nicoghos seemed to stand before her; come at last safe and unhurt; and oh, how fresh and young was that dear face still, with its child's lips, its sweet, mischievous smile! . . . And those wonderful eyes! How gravely, sternly even, they looked at her, and sadly! . . . But what had he to make him sad? . . . Is this sternness a reproach? . . . Why, is not all well, Nicoghos? There is no danger; here, in the chamber, he is in safety . . . none will touch him . . . no one dare touch him . . . here, on his mother's heart. Gohar made a tremendous

effort, and freeing herself from the chair, she sprang towards the place where she saw her son, but stopped in sudden stupefaction and recoiled, uttering a feeble cry, followed by rending sobs. . . . She had roused herself from her dream. In the place where she had seen her son there was only a photograph of him.

A candle set upon the table gave a dismal, flickering light. The first faint glimmer of the dawn made its way timidly through the east window. On a pale-blue sky, flecked with long wisps of greenish clouds, the last stars were fading. The veil of night was slowly withdrawn, the chalk-white peaks of the minarets began to show through it. The wind of the dawn swept over the garden, filling it with a sweet, mysterious murmur.

"He is not coming! he is not coming!" Gohar kept saying, in a tone of despair, nervously knotting up the long black tresses of her flowing hair. The uncertainty was agony to her. The unusual absence of Nicoghos at such an hour could only be explained by some accident. Accident? was it that? or had Arakel really denounced his son? No, that could not be, it was impossible. . . . And yet, last night he had come home at a late hour, shut himself into his room and turned the key, and then for a whole hour he had walked up and down in evident agitation. Then all sounds had ceased, and she had got anxious, and called him several times, knocking at the door. . . . But there was no reply. . . . Good God! what if something had happened to him, to her husband! And she was lost in ominous conjectures, and "cursed her day"; then she beat on the door

with her closed hands, and pressed strongly against it with her breast and head. . . . And suddenly she was aware of a sharp pain in her head, just in the place where she had been struck in the morning. It was like an iron band on her brow, a burning sensation which passed right down her spine and then turned to icy cold. Standing in the middle of the room, suddenly she thought she heard a sound. She hearkened. In the quiet house she could distinguish stealthy footsteps coming from the next room. Alas, no, it was not her boy's bounding step. Whose was it? Who was coming? . . . What was required of her? . . . Ah! if she might only be left alone there, night and day, till some one came with the voice of Nicoghos, that was ringing in her ears! And as the heavy tread was heard more clearly, she shuddered, and sprang to a corner of the room, as if filled with sudden terror, and there she cowered, all trembling. Something seemed to catch her by the throat, half-strangling her, so that she could scarcely breathe, and with nervous fingers she clutched wildly at her cheeks. Her wide, fearful eyes were fastened on the door. At that moment Arakel appeared on the threshold like a terrible ghost, his face white and sombre, his hair dishevelled, his grey moustache limp, and his eyes wild. The candle which he held lit up his face with weird effect, and the furrowed traces of his long agony. . . . A few minutes elapsed in silence. Arakel, without moving, strove to catch his wife's eye.

"Gohar," he said at last thickly.

She started with a shudder, and tried to speak, but the words stuck in her throat.

"Gohar," said Arakel gravely, raising his voice somewhat, and stepping into the room a little way, looking unstrung yet unyielding.

"Arakel . . ." groaned Gohar at length, and she advanced to meet her husband.

He did not answer at once, and for some moments they both stood staring at each other.

"Gohar, save your son . ." said Arakel at last, and the candle shook in his hand.

"My son? what . my son?"

"Gohar," said Arakel, rather loudly, "save your son."

"What? *save my son?* Oh, is he lost?"

"He will be lost if you don't save him . . . He is in danger, save him . . ."

"Save him? How? . From what? what danger?" asked Gohar almost stupidly

"The *mutessarif* knows everything . . I have told him all."

Suddenly Gohar began to sob wildly.

"Wretch, you have denounced your son! . . . You have sold your blood . . . Ah, he has denounced my Nicoghos, my darling child! . . . My God, this is too much, too much!" and, wringing her hands, she flung herself in despair upon the bed.

"Don't be a fool, woman, save him. . . Tell him to leave the town as quickly as possible . . . to leave the country . . now . . ."

"So you will chase your child from his home after denouncing him? . . May the curse of God fall on us! . . ." and after a pause she took fright. . . .
 "What shall I say to him if he asks me why? How . . . how am I to have heard of his betrayal?"

A cloud of anger rested on the brow of Arakel *agha*, whilst anguish looked out of his eyes.

"Tell him the truth," he said at last in a stifled voice.

"The truth! . . . Ah, poor boy! . . . The truth?" . . . said Gohar, and suddenly an awful thought struck her, and she added: "But his comrades will avenge him. . . . They will kill you. . . ."

Arakel *agha* braced himself up as if he had received a blow, and trembling all over with passion, he cried: "They dare not!"

Gohar shivered, and was silent in the clutch of sudden terror. . . . Arakel *agha* turned towards the door, the candle swaying in his shaking hand. He left the room with his angry, sinister face. . . .

CHAPTER VIII

THE ASPATAKS

THE ruins of ancient days are scattered throughout the whole of Armenia, like doleful and deserted cemeteries. Silent and sombre, yet they remain a speaking witness of past ages, telling us that even in the days of Assyrian, Persian, and Roman invasions, the country was not drowned so deep in misery as it is to-day.

One of those magnificent monuments, the remains of a half-ruined fort, sheer and naked, though moss-grown in places, touched with chill melancholy, is set upon one of the thickly-wooded mountains of Janik, in Little Armenia. Clinging to the mountain-side, at a great height, with frowning aspect, this monumental ruin is sullen and solitary. Its profound slumbers are unbroken save by the sinister cry of the owl at night, or the angry rush of the wild boar beneath its walls, or when a fragmentary cloud, wandering like some lost creature, clings to the mountain crest, and gently weeps itself away in cold, dripping tears.

It is a token from days long departed, a treasure-house of the secrets of history, that bring the dead

to life again. To-night it slept, dumb and dream-clad, under a thick cloak of snow, looking like a grim giant ghost that had been disinterred from the abyss of centuries gone by

"The snow still falls, it falls in big flakes," said one of the two personages, who were leaning up against the ruined walls, in a cramped position, covered with snow

"Minas said to-day that winter was beginning in good earnest, and that we had better betake ourselves to the villages and pass the cold months there—in hiding, you understand," said the other, who seemed to wish to escape from his heavy thoughts

They were silent. An immense view was spread before their eyes. Snow, snow, and still snow—it followed the long downward trend of the mountain towards its distant base. There the white winding-sheet concealed a large, level, and desolate valley, on whose other side a high, steep mountain arose. That too, was obscured by the snowflakes, which poured without ceasing in the death-like silence of Nature from a sky equally white, level, lowering and lifeless

"Hullo! do you see something moving down there in the valley?" said one of the two sentinels, looking keenly into the distance

"Where? Which side?"

"Down there to the left," replied the other, pointing with his finger. "Look! it is something long."

"Ah, yes, it is a moving line. Can it be a file of soldiers?" was the anxious question.

The other did not reply at once.

"No, I don't think so. No, they are not soldiers," he added positively. "Do you think that the *kaimakam* would dare to send out soldiers against Minas?" he exclaimed disdainfully. "No, the authorities know his courage, and the range of his rifle, too well."

He was silent, and both continued to gaze into the distance at that same moving file, which gradually became more distinct.

"It is a caravan," one exclaimed, after a short pause, "and what a length it is!"

They leant up against the walls again for a moment, and remained thoughtful and silent.

"That 'armed force'!" said the first sentinel with a scornful laugh. "You should have seen Minas during the battle against Shirin Ali. I was with him then."

"Is that the Circassian brigand who plundered our country?"

"Yes, that's the man, and the authorities could not get hold of him—or rather they would not," he corrected himself, "because this *kaimakam* was a friend, a secret ally, who always shared the booty with them. However, it was the Governor of Sivas who sent a strong detachment of the army against him. But neither could he do anything. Then our Minas (who at that time was not a revolutionary), came forward, spoke up to the authorities, and offered, if they would provide the necessary arms, to get together a group of men, and defeat Shirin Ali. And so he did; he killed him without more ado. But this *kaimakam*, a Circassian *parvenu*, pursued Minas, and killed his brother, and then

Minas turned revolutionary. After that he killed Mevlut *tchavoosh*, the scourge of the Armenian villages. You yourself know how, lately, he killed two famous *Lase* brigands, Lokman and Kutchug Hassan, men officially decorated with high places in the Government, by which they profited to spoil and slay Armenians."

"Ah, those were terrible days for our province!" commented his hearer sadly

"Shall I tell you something else?" the first sentinel began again suddenly, after a long silence. "You know how we adore Minas? If he told us to go to our deaths we should go. Besides, he is the Chief of our group; it was he that, with the help of the committee first organised us, and we ourselves chose him for our Chief. But for all that, I don't like the way he has; he shows far too much mercy to enemies. I can't do with that"

"Upon what sort of occasion?"

"Upon all sorts of occasions. For instance, in this very October last, during the tax-gathering, do you remember how we saved several villages from the claws of those monsters of Turks, and entered the villages boldly, and how he talked to the *multesims*, the *tchavooshes*, and all that rabble of *saptis*, and told them that he, Minas, forbade them to go back to those villages any more?"

"Yes, yes, and he encouraged the peasants to send the monsters about their business every time, to make a stand against them."

"Yes, and always to say that they had nothing to pay in taxes, and that they refused to pay. Well," exclaimed the first sentinel, "it makes me mad now,

when I think that Minas didn't kill those dogs instead of saying to them, 'Go, and don't dare come back, and tell your masters that these villages belong to Minas, and that he does not permit the peasants to pay taxes.' He should have sent a corpse to the *kaimakam* as a present, and the Turkish carrion crow would not have dared to show his beak again."

"But you know very well that he always begins to feel tender to the conquered. You know he always makes us leave the weak alone."

Again they were silent, each busied with his thoughts.

Like a veil of spotted net, the snow was spread out on the air, always falling. In the distance the lingering shuddering cry of an owl was heard like a dismal lamentation. Some time later, from another direction, the night-jar creaked with its ugly whirring grating din, that spreads superstitious terror around.

One of the two sentinels began slowly to pace the wall, and reaching the end, he turned to the right and disappeared behind the ruins. After a while, he reappeared from the other side, and came and went a silent figure, and was lost again in the blinding snow.

When, after half an hour, he finished his usual round, he stopped near his companion, who began to make the same round in his turn, also in silence, stepping lightly and holding his gun against his breast.

* From time to time the dull sinister cry of the owl rent the air, or, all at once, the ugly noise of the night-jar began again, filling the air at times with its ominous sound, and then, as suddenly ceasing, leaving

a horror of silence to weigh upon the numb and desert world.

"It is time to awake him, I think," said the sentinel who was making his rounds, and he stopped in front of his comrade "It is more than two o'clock."

"No, we have a whole hour yet Minas told me to wake him at three o'clock"

"What do you think, where will Tchello go to?" asked the first, after a pause

"Tchello?" And the other lingered with tones of admiration on the name, and then was silent. Then as his comrade continued to look at him, he added pensively "Who knows? Tchello is everywhere and nowhere at the same moment The authorities are looking for him in Cilicia, while he sleeps peacefully under the roof of this palace of Minas," and he pointed with his finger to the ruins "The lion is come to be the tiger's guest To-morrow, perhaps, Tchello will pass through the ranks of soldiers and police without number who are hunting him; and they will all know him, and all salute him too, and even stand aside to make a way for him."

"Tell me, is it true what they say of Tchello everywhere among the Armenians, the Kurds, the Turks? They say that neither ball nor dagger have any effect upon him."

"Oh yes, the Armenian and the Mussulman women have made many songs about him, and for them he is a hero, like those in their legends They say he is some ancient hero come back to life, come from an unknown wizard world, fallen in a miracle from the skies; his eyes, they say, are as black as night, and sparkle like two stars, his *Lase* dress is all silken, with

threads of silver and gold; his weapons and his armour have stars on them which shine like little suns; flame flashes from the eyes and nostrils of his Arab steed, that flies on wings of fire, and, covered with smoke and foam-flecked, carries off the hero, and with him, the hearts of a thousand women. And much more of the same kind. Amongst the people they sing many such things. The Turks and the people admire him too," continued the narrator, after a short pause, "for they say that not only does Tchello stand up for the Armenian villages, but also that he has more than once defended Turkish villages against the tax-gatherers. Dozens of our imprisoned comrades have been set free by him, and a Turk amongst them."

During the tale the other sentinel uttered exclamations of astonishment and admiration, although it was not the first time he had heard about Tchello.

"Is his group a large one?" he asked.

"They say not. Twenty to thirty volunteers at the most, but well-armed. They say he loves to go about alone. And you saw how he came here, alone, quite suddenly and unexpected, as if he fell from the sky. Oh, he can work miracles—miracles!"

He ceased to speak, made a round of the ruins, came back and stood still on the place, and after a few minutes began again.

"If we had had a dozen Tchellos, our nation would have been saved . . . the rising would have been general and complete. Who amongst the people would not go with Tchello? All of them—arms or no arms! Tchello!" with the same admiring accents as before. "Tchello!" he repeated after a short re-

flection, "his speaking makes your heart burn, and he organises his groups so well. And then lots of revolutionaries from the towns who want to be in hiding come out to him—he finds places for them all in the villages, which are his entirely—and the brave things he has done are more than I can tell," he added significantly. "The Government trembles at his name, but the people rejoice in him."

"Where was he born?" asked the other, who wished to hear more talk of the hero whom all admired.

"Nobody knows ; he himself never tells."

"Have we any more like Tchello among our revolutionary *aspataks*?"

"Like Tchello?" the other asked with astonishment. "As if two Tchellos could exist at once! Yet our Minas is very brave, very famous," he added. "Some day his name will be like that of Tchello. And then you must not forget that the group of Minas, that is to say ours, is twice as numerous as that of Tchello. Not counting Minas, we still have Léon of Taron, Hako, our Zengujian, and Nicoghos, and Tzaroukian, who is already called the second Tchello, and many more, all very brave and well-known, who have large groups, ready to be the van-guard when the rising breaks out."

"Oh, Tzaroukian! I know him well. . . . Hako, you mentioned? Ah, yes, there are many astonishing things told about him; they say he is brave to the verge of cruelty. There's a great deal of talk about Nicoghos. They say he attacked a strong detachment of the guards on a march to rescue some comrades under arrest, and that he succeeded too. They

say that later on the rescued ones were almost all re-arrested, and that during an attempted escape from prison they were all killed on the spot."

"All that is only too true."

"It is true," resumed the other, after a pause. "They say that Nicoghos is the son of a wealthy man, who denounced him, and several others as well. They told me that in the committee with his comrades Nicoghos voted the decree of death against his own father; and afterward, with his denounced comrades, withdrew to the mountains and organised his group of revolutionary *aspataks*."

Scarcely had he finished speaking when from a high wall, among the ruins, suddenly an owl screeched ominously. The two sentinels started.

"Curse you! may your cry bode ill to yourself!" growled one of the two sentinels, and, separating, they both began to make their rounds again. They were both profoundly moved by their talk, and their impressions excited their imagination, filling their hearts with marvel and fantasy, and a thrilling desire to do some brave deed.

"It is three o'clock already, I must wake him now," said one of them, and disappeared down a sort of wide passage among the ruins.

Some time after he issued from the same place with two other men, one of them of middle height, the other tall; both wore long *yapoonjies* on their shoulders, and *bashligs* enveloped their heads.

"Babken, and you, Goorgèn," said the lesser of the two men to the sentinels, "keep your eyes open; every one is still asleep. I am going away with Tchello, and shall return towards evening."

And as he continued to give his orders three more men came out of the same passage, all in the dress of *Lases*, with cartridge-holders girt round their chests and backs in the form of cross-belts, and each armed with a gun, a dagger, and a revolver.

"Come, Tchello, and you, my friends!" said the same voice, and the five men began to descend into the valley, walking lightly and cheerfully. A little time, and they could no longer be discried from the high ruins, which remained in their nakedness and eternal solitude, over-shadowed by the same eternal green.

"The troubles of the Armenians of Yozgat are very heavy," the man of middle height began, addressing Tchello.

Neither of them had spoken hitherto. They had gone on silently, side by side, each absorbed in his thoughts, whilst the other three men walked a little way behind them, silent and thoughtful also.

"The refusal to pay the taxes, the despatch of the police officials with the *saptus* and the whole company, the protest made to the Central Government against the persecutions, to the Armenian Patriarchate, too, and to the Governor of Sivas; then the threat of setting fire to the official buildings, and all the rest of it," the same voice went on, "all these are very good signs, and show that the Armenians of Yozgat have at last got their eyes open, and are capable of going to all lengths."

"But these protests are no good at all," said Tchello; "they are only so much waste-paper."

They were silent for some moments.

"Yes, but I don't think we can help them from this side, whilst on the other side the Government's

armed forces lie not far from Yozgat, and then, who knows? They may fall on them unexpectedly, and reduce the village to cinders."

"No, Minas," said Tchello, calmly and seriously, "the Yozgatiotes are brave. They may be defeated, perhaps, but they would be all killed before they allowed their town and villages to be burned. I think they will arrange a sort of truce, after which Yozgat can recover itself and prepare for a more favourable occasion. That is just why Zhirair has left it, otherwise his presence would be in the way of the truce. For in Siva country he would indeed be clever to escape the clutches of the police. They were on his track and his arrest seemed inevitable."

The little party had now walked for almost an hour, and were already in the valley, whose two sides rose away into the distance. The snow fell less heavily, and the white, unbroken surface of the sky was slowly lifting, and becoming less dense. They all walked on in silence. And now, at a word from Minas, they hastened their steps. But the more they did so the more their feet sank into the snow, and they only made their way with difficulty.

"Ah, if only this *vali* and this *kaimakam* fall into my hands, I will show them the road to Damascus!" exclaimed Minas suddenly, with an angry groan.

That cry was Minas all over. Courageous, bold, burning with the desire for combat, proud, with an absolute faith in his own powers, in the astonishing precision of his aim, and in the usefulness of the part he took for the Cause, he became impatient before difficulties and dangers, and obstinate, too, tormented

with the desire for vengeance which devoured him, although he was never known to raise his hand against a disarmed or vanquished foe. To him that was cowardice, and was severely punished as such by him among the men of his group. But he was a man of action and of energy, who refused to deal in truces. During those long winter months, fatigued and irritated by inaction, he would sometimes snatch up his gun, which he only used in cases of extreme necessity, stick his dagger in his belt, and, quite alone, in his *Laze* costume, leave the village where he was hiding, and, going from place to place, would seek to find out the feeling of the people in one spot, while in another he would organise little groups for resistance, sowing broadcast his ideas of vengeance and revolt. Often, on such occasions, he ran enormous risks of arrest. Many and many a time, too, disguised as a Turk, he went into the towns, entered into consultation with the local patriots, even going so far as to risk setting up relations with the *saptis*, the *tchavooshes*, the *employés*, even with a few of the official secretaries. It was quite a gay little comedy to him to make friends with them thus, in simple, discreet, and often in *naïve* ways; frequently, too, getting them to chatter by means of *bakshish*. So he frequently succeeded in collecting useful and necessary information on the subject of the secret doings of the local official circles, of their plans, of their talk, and of the private orders received from the *Vali*, or Central Government.

They were still walking in the valley, when Minas, pointing to the distance, exclaimed: "There, at last, I can see the village."

For a whole hour the snow had ceased to fall. A faint, uncertain light had spread over a large, calm surface of the sky, like pale blue enamel. A few minutes more and the first shafts of the sun awoke it from its long heavy slumbers.

The highest snow-covered mountain-tops were like rose-tinted crystals; and as the light became clearer, this rose changed to the hues of gold, and the summits stood out against the sky like shining pieces of cut topaz. The valley still slept under its snow covering, in a pale, soft twilight. Yet, higher up, on the shoulders of a chain of mountains, here and there the sunlight made the snow sparkle like a thousand stars. At the bottom of the valley the village, all white with snow, still seemed to be dozing, save for a thread of smoke from the first morning fire going spirally up from some cottage chimney. The naked branches of the trees, heavy with snow, innumerable as in a forest, made an airy network against the white background. Somewhere a little river murmured, lost and plaintive, smothered beneath the ice and snow.

At length the little party entered the village, and went along by a hedge, a very long one, behind which a flock of sheep were to be seen. By its side was another higher hedge, covered with a thick thatch of straw. It was the stable. Between the roof and the hedge, the whole way along, there was an opening, whence one could hear the chewing of horses and cows. From the interior of the cottages arose from time to time a subdued sound of morning industry.

"Little one, go and fetch water from the brook," the party of men heard a woman's voice say as they passed a cottage door. At the same time they heard

out of the silence the sharp thud of a wooden bucket against the stone.

"In one minute," replied a clear voice.

"Little one," called the first voice again, "have you ground the corn?"

"All but a few handfuls, grandmother," replied the clear voice, further off this time, and all was silent again.

"We are just in time," said Minas; "the village is awake. I daresay Zhirair is already waiting for us."

A few steps further on the small party stopped before a door. Minas knocked.

"Ah, here you are at last. How many years is it, eh? Three, or four? But you are no longer Sako, you are Tchello, the people's hero. Come, come, let me embrace you, my friend."

And in his emotion Zhirair clasped Sako to his heart, and embraced him several times, laughing, talking, and ejaculating. Sako, who as an *aspatak* bore the name of "Tchello," was touched to tears.

"Ah, my friend, you are the same—you have not changed," he exclaimed. "Everywhere I hear your name. Sometimes they say that Morook has vanished, and no one knows where he can be. Another time they say that Morook has appeared, like a ghost, in such and such a province—at Kharpoot, at Arabkir, at Dersim—where they say he was negotiating with the Kurds for united action with the Armenians. These latter days I heard that you were at Sivas, then at Cæsarea, then at Yozgat. Yes, I even received a letter saying you were at Yozgat, when yesterday, as I returned from the village, Minas made me jump by saying that you were here."

"Yes, here I am, here I am!" exclaimed Zhirair gaily, in a voice that became shrill and high.

The three comrades were alone in the little room. Minas, silent and happy, watched the two friends who never ceased speaking for a moment.

"And where are you off to next?" asked Sako in a joking friendly tone

"To Marzovan."

"They want to see him badly," said Minas.

"Yes, I'm thinking of going," repeated Zhirair, with a pensive air, and after a short pause, having suddenly become serious, he began to grumble "I ought to go to several places. Certainly I shall go first to Marzovan, afterwards I must go to the Kurds—I think of buying a large quantity of arms from them," he added thoughtfully, with downcast eyes, and he scratched his wrinkled forehead with his finger.

"It is certain that you will succeed, if you only try hard enough," said Minas, setting his powerful square jaw, and closing his long thin lips, which showed clearly beneath his carefully twisted moustaches. His face just then had an expression of firm resolution.

"If Morook wants to do a thing, he can't rest till he has got his wish," said Sako pleasantly, with his hearty laugh, taking the *bashlig* from his head, which had hid the hardy, energetic, and resolute expression on his fine, manly face.

Minas followed his example, and both took off their mantles, appearing in the light and close-fitting *Lase* costume, which lends its wearer the look of brave and agile vigour. Cross-belts full of cartridges begirt

their bodies. They were armed with revolvers. Zhirair kept looking at them.

"If Tchello and Minas were to come to my aid, all you say would certainly be true. But we must talk about that afterwards," he said, rising briskly from the divan. "Let us have some hot coffee now, and do you warm yourselves at the *mangal*. Here is the old dame with the cups. We are safe, and we will stay here till the evening ; afterwards we shall see——"

"Good morning, my children," was the old woman's greeting as she entered the room with three cups of coffee.

"How are you, mother?" said Minas, addressing her genially.

"Eh, pretty well. If I had your youth, your strength, and your stature, I know that with a spirit like mine it would have been a very different story."

The old woman made a wry mouth, and her intelligent, energetic face darkened.

After a little the talk turned upon the subject of the peasants' work, the last harvest, the goodness of the soil ; and then the old woman put in a long lament against poverty. If only the government would let the peasants alone they could conquer their troubles somehow or other ; but there they were—ever since she could remember—it was an old story—she had never known better days.

A man of about thirty-five entered the room bearing a *mangal*, which held red-hot charcoal. He had a sullen air, and looked furtively under his brows.

"Take that fellow to the mountains with you," the old woman said to Minas. "I don't want him. My other son Sérobik is good enough for me."

"But Pétros must stay here in the house," said Minas. "Is it not necessary even for my business that he should always be here when I come to stay in the winter?"

The old woman protested, and then after some thought, said again to Minas, with a decided air: "Then take Sérobik; he is twenty—the age for a volunteer. He will be useful to you."

Minas did not answer at once. He consulted Zhirair and Sako with a look, and then, hesitating a little under the old woman's keen glances, he said: "But he is so young. It seems a pity."

The old woman interrupted harshly: "Pity? Why a pity? Death must come one day or another. It had better be a soldier's death."

Zhirair interposed seriously: "Why should it be? There are plenty of others like him in readiness; they will be wanted some day, on the day of the great fight. Why risk his life before then?"

But the old woman was obstinate. "Before that day," she repeated, in grumbling tones, and she added proudly, after a pause, and yet sadly too: "And besides, what is the use? The life we are living here is full of risks each day. If he falls dead in battle, that will be a death of some use."

CHAPTER IX

MORE OF THE ASPATAKS

FOR several hours the three friends, by themselves in the same room, were occupied in discussing their affairs, in exchanging news. They dwelt long upon the troubles of Yozgat, and Zhirair recounted many interesting details of the courage, good sense and decision of the Yozgatiotes, as well as their action. Their action, unhappily, was abortive, and could not be otherwise, for the simple reason that to do any lasting good, they required to be reinforced by simultaneous movements in several, at least, of the neighbouring provinces. Finally, the conversation turned upon what was being done by the *aspataks*, to which all three attached great importance from the point of view of educating the people to revolt, and as the preparation for groups of better organised military forces.

"You know as well as I," said Zhirair, "that your volunteers must be expert in handling arms, and in the knowledge of all sorts of mountain-fighting; for in the mountains a group of your *aspataks*, relatively few in number, can successfully rout a much more numerous force. They can cut off the enemies' retreat or delay, or prevent by their adroit manœuvres

the centralisation of the enemies' forces, or even engage them in one of the passes where a skirmish might prove disastrous to them. These groups have more advantages still ; above all, their rôle is to act as the vanguard of the insurrectionist forces."

The conversation lingered over this* theme. A faint cold light entered by the little barred window. The three men were seated round the *mangal*, looking calm and serious. Returning to the question of the purchase of arms, Zhirair grew animated

"I swear I can procure the arms from the Kurds in large quantities ; but, as I've said before, the money is wanting , they ask a big price "

All were agreed that the money was not to be obtained from the rich Armenians. Many of these carried on a vile commerce with the authorities, even with the central Government. Others were unwilling to give material aid, even if they were shown its immediate use. The Party, overburdened with affairs all over the country, had great need of money everywhere, being unable to meet the least of its expenses. What it had was largely made up by material sacrifices on the part of certain of its members.

Zhirair became fierce before the evident impossibility of counting upon the good feeling of the rich people.

"Very good ; I think it is time to threaten these heartless, avaricious folk, who are sold to the enemy. It is becoming an absolute necessity. We can't let the Cause die, or even go bankrupt after all, simply because these folk, with their bellies full of money and their empty heads and unfeeling hearts, are pleased to laugh at the sufferings of their own people.

In the name of the nation's redemption, this wealthy set must be scared, for it's the only way to open their purses. If, say, ten rich men were each to offer the hundredth part of their wealth to the Cause, we could make all the necessary preparations. And if not——"

His face darkened, and he was silent. There was an opposition. Sako, though he was of the same mind about the detestable and unpatriotic conduct of the rich class, thought the use of threats in order to obtain the money of this class unjustifiable. Such an act might easily obscure the real aim of the revolutionaries, namely, the general redemption, and thus the idea—the Party and the Cause—might be discredited. Moreover, unscrupulous people might be emboldened to insinuate themselves into the Party, and don the revolutionary cap, with the sole though unavowed aim of blackmailing, perhaps even going so far as to assassinate rich individuals, and afterwards pocket all the plunder.

Zhirair was getting angry. Then there was no other chance of getting the money. If such arguments were to stand, fresh annoyances, difficulties, and obstacles would arise on all sides. And, after a pause, utterly possessed by the idea, which had beset and tortured him for several months, he suddenly added :

"Very well, then, in that case there is only one other way of buying the arms from the Kurds, and it is the last chance—by attacking the mail."

With nervous fingers he rolled a cigarette, and as neither of his two friends said anything, he added slowly and clearly :

"And for that I need your aid, both of you. "You must do this deed."

Sako lifted his pensive eyes on Zhirair, and looked him in the face for some moments with a profound expression, and then dropped them again on the glowing *mangal*. Minas frowned in silence.

"You see, friends, it is the last and the only way that remains to us," Zhirair almost shouted with impatience. "To have these arms is a question of life or death with us. For such an end may we not attack the mail and take the money that the Government has stolen from the people?"

"But is that not just carrying the argument to the bitter end?" said Sako thoughtfully, after a short and painful silence. "The Government would only make good its loss by a double theft from the people, and it would mean a series of arrests from among our young men, and the innocent that follow us?"

"Government does all that already without any attack," grumbled Zhirair bitterly.

"Yes, no doubt, but after an attack upon the mail the Government would gain a deceptive appearance of justice for acts of crying injustice; it would have gained the right of representing us revolutionaries, as mere brigands and highwaymen, and their persecution of our people would gain invincible force. The Government, is only looking for pretexts, futile as they may be."

"Let the thread be woven thick or thin, the price is the same," replied Zhirair in the words of a proverb. "If we are always to count the cost, it will be very difficult for us to throw off the Ottoman yoke. Weave it thick, and if you ask me," he added, agitated

and almost angry, "I am willing that the mail should be attacked, and that the people that accompany it even, those cursed officials, should be felled and murdered like wild beasts."

"But if those who make the attack should find it unnecessary to shed blood?" asked Minas in a thick voice, for he felt himself disarmed already at the thought of killing people who could not perhaps defend themselves

"My good friends, what are you talking about? Is it a necessity that the Government should cut the throats of hundreds of our countrymen, or cause our babes to be vaccinated with poison, as it did the other day in the case of five hundred children in Cilicia? Is it——"

He was interrupted by Sako, who said with his thoughtful air "But the postal official is not responsible for all that," and for a moment his looks became lost and distant, while deep in his soul an obscure and far-away memory was awakened. He was seized with melancholy

"The postal official?" cried Zhirair. "Is not he, too, one of those same dogs? If he could, would not he also cut our throats?" And almost trembling with anger, devoured by his one desire of obtaining arms, irritated by his ill success even with his friends, he rose quickly from his place, moved by a dull rage, which he scarcely concealed as he began to pace the room.

"The postal official? Would not he, too, like to cut our throats?" Sako repeated mentally, sad and thoughtful. And the bare plain rose up before him asleep and lifeless in the autumn sunshine, in the

hushed, sullen, and depressing solitude. * Then he saw the little caravan, the poor *merkes*, lost in this silent desert, between the pale sky and the level earth, stretched out like a dying creature. Then he could distinguish the horses, as they stood awaiting their master, and a little apart, the *tatar* himself, who, with his heart frozen with fear, stood nailed to the spot, clutched by horrible foreboding, his looks lost in space, in the distance, where that proud and solitary oak tree grew. And he had the sensation of hearing, as in an echo, the voice of the *tatar*, bewailing the injustice of Fate, which was bringing him, perhaps, to his death, down there, under that same oak tree, whose mournful, mysterious shade concealed, maybe, the hand that held the dagger. Sako shuddered. No, that hand should not be his, which should only serve to avenge the suffering people. The postal official? But was he not also a son of the people, this official, like Sako himself? Was he not as unhappy as he, Sako, though unconscious of the real cause? Yes, Sako would shed blood, but only the blood of the enemy, for the triumph of right, of freedom, and happiness.

Next night four men mounted on horseback were making their way through a long and winding valley in the mountains of Davshan. It was Sako, with three *aspataks*. The night was cold, the air limpid, the vast, pure, lofty heavens sown with innumerable, silvery stars. The moon was flooding the snow, which stretched away endlessly, with her shivering, cold light; and under the deep, mysterious silence, the country seemed for ever dead and frozen. Sometimes the

valley widened out, and then, all flat in the moonlight, it looked sad and dreary. Sometimes it grew quite narrow, and then the mountains on each side closed up, in huge masses, their naked rocks protruding like sharp tusks, and their bold, menacing crests, white with snow, thrust into the heart of the skies. At such places the valley was dim, and seemed filled with mystery and dread. There were also vast, thick, deep forests, but most of the trees at that season were leafless and bare, their branches twisted into contorted shapes, whilst the dark pines and firs were weighed down by palls of snow in dull and heavy slumber, un murmuring and motionless, like ghosts with outstretched arms.

The group of horsemen were passing through a narrow, sombre gorge, on either side of which enormous masses of rocks arose, and they seemed to have slipped down like some avalanche from invisible heights. Suddenly in the quiet of the night a tinkling of little bells came out of the distance, a tinkle sometimes sharp, sometimes broken and uncertain, a gentle, melancholy ringing, that died away in a mournful echo, like the clear murmur of a running river. At times the tinkle suddenly ceased, the last notes ringing out, dying, and getting faint, till they were lost somewhere in the distance, among the hills, in the depths of the caverns. Sometimes the clear notes began again, struck once, twice, and then many times, confused into one sound, thrilling through the air, and suddenly stopping again, dying away, and ceasing.

"Is it a caravan?" asked Sako, who had been silent for some hours.

"Yes, a caravan," replied one of his companions, "and we shall soon meet it. Do you hear? The tinkling of the bells grows more distinct and comes nearer. It is coming towards us."

Through the deep gorge their horses went at a good, brisk pace, and lightly, their manes like fans against the wind, their big, sparkling eyes fixed on the distance, their nostrils twitching, and sneezing from time to time; and the noise of their hoofs struck a sounding echo against the overhanging rocks. After some time they emerged from the gorge, and the valley opened out before them, broad, quiet, and level, and bathed in moonlight. Our horsemen could distinguish a long, black, swerving line below against the snowy background. It was the caravan. It came on at a gentle, weary pace. The backs of the mules and horses were laden with big sacks and bundles. On several, human beings were seated, cramped with cold, and bowed in sleep. They were the travellers—Turks, Greeks, and Armenians—men, women, and a few children. Most of the men were walking, however, whilst one of them headed the caravan.

Sako was suddenly filled with sadness. It seemed to him as if it were only yesterday that his own little company was making for Shabin-Garahissar. And as in a picture there arose before him, like a distant dream, the mysterious encounter between the three individuals and his little company on the naked, level plain, near the town of Z——, in the night, under the fine, incessant rain. And he had the sensation, for an instant, of all that had passed afterwards, when his company quitted that town, after a night full of torment. There it was, climbing con-

tinually up a twisting path which led to a mountain-top of some height. The sun poured its dazzling rays from the cloudless, deep-vaulted sky, upon the thick-set shrubs which clothed the mountain with their bright foliage. At last they had reached the top of the mountain. Here was a broad tableland, from the two sides of which great forests stretched away. The path ran alongside one of these. A warm breeze blew gently, bringing with it the pleasant scent of the pines. All around was dumb and desert between the sky and the mountain-top, as if asleep in eternal silence. All at once a clamour arose, and about thirty Kurdish brigands rushed out of the forest at a gallop and assailed them. And these brigands were the friends of the muleteers, who, the evening before, having met the three individuals unexpectedly, had formed the plan of attack.

And he thought he could hear his sister's cries, and the children's, and the oaths of his father as he struggled in the hands of his assailants. Poor father! his bones were reposing in peace long since, down there, far away under the snow, in the little lonely cemetery. What a long time had passed since then! But how quickly those years had passed — those years of crises and of torments!

And then the face of Thoros rose up before him. He was always there, on the battlefields, full of energy, indefatigable, employing all his eloquence, all his powers, and unfurling his standard of the ideal of his people's redemption, that was to hover over the whole nation, prophesying deliverance and happiness. And a softer feeling stole over Sako, as, in thinking of Thoros, he murmured: "My father in the Lord

—my godfather!" But suddenly his face darkened. And the other, he who, after giving him the necessary counsels, had kissed him on the forehead at the last moment as they parted, wishing him a brave, good fight—Garéguin, that gentle shade from the night of the past—what had become of him?

A few days after Sako's departure, Garéguin, returning home at nightfall, had been surprised near his house, and felled by the blows of *captifs*, only to awake in prison. . . . After some years had passed it was rumoured that, in consequence of the tortures he had endured, his gentle soul had fled—Garéguin was no more. . . . And once more Sako felt as if he had been stabbed in the heart; he was overwhelmed for the moment. Then a sullen rage took hold of him, his soul suddenly burned for vengeance, and angry and impatient, a prey to sharp suffering, he gave an order in a strong, but shaking voice:

"Friends, stop that!" and with a nod, he indicated the caravan which was now scarcely fifty paces off.

A long shudder passed over the whole caravan when they saw before them three armed men who ordered it to halt. Filled with terror and confusion, the file stopped short. A few feeble cries from the women broke the silence, the last tinkle of the little bells died away in the air, and the body of the caravan stood as if frozen, without a movement, in the terrible silence, under the dead moonlight.

Sako came forward, and, deeply moved within, he ordered his *aspataks*, in Turkish, to search and disarm the men. The confusion was general; all the travellers dismounted from the mules, the women

and children hugged one another close, and presently they formed a compact mass, all silent, in consternation, but submissive. Sako and his three *aspataks* were before them, still on horseback, and the mantles thrown back from their shoulders showed their *Lase* costumes, their rich armour and weapons, shining in the moonlight with a cold, menacing, and sinister lustre.

"Slaves!" cried Sako angrily, as his *aspataks* returned to him. "Slaves!" he repeated, "look, you are much more numerous than we, you have more than twenty-five men there, half of whom were still armed not a moment ago, and you did not dare to lift your voices against us four! Very well, then, all the goods on the mules, the beasts, your women's ornaments, their honour, their lives, the lives of their children, and of all of you are mine—why, you are but slaves in my hands now! Reply, is it not as I say?"

"Yes, yes, *effendi*," stammered several voices.

"Oh, I pray you, take what you will, take all—all belongs to you, but, for Heaven's sake, don't take our lives, the lives of our children," pleaded a woman's voice.

And that voice overcame Sako. Once more he recalled his own little company, his sister, her two children. And after a few minutes' silence, he cried in an angry voice touched with bitterness:

"Now do not weep. See! Listen to me!" And he began to speak. He told them he and his friends were not brigands who attacked caravans and slew defenceless travellers. No, they were not brigands. The real brigand and the chief of them all was the Government, whose officials were the brigands; its police that were always swarming everywhere; those

famous Circassian, Turkish, and Kurdish assassins were the brigands, who became favourites with the Government, and were loaded with gifts, privileges, high offices, and honours, while they shared the booty. The Government was the brigand with its army of officials, who in all sorts of ways plundered, persecuted, and abused the masses of the people, be they Armenian, Turkish, or Greek. The Government was the assassin, with its organised murders, its imprisonment, exile, torture, and execution of brave men whose hearts bled to see the misery of their country and their people, who had sacrificed their peace, their wealth, their happiness, their families, their own lives, to die for the good of their countrymen. He, Sako, and his friends were such men; they had sworn to fight against all these brigands, thieves, and assassins—to fight without truce, without mercy, to the very end, were it to perish or to triumph.

And as he continued to speak like one inspired, full of a bitter strength, the caravan folk stood breathless and open-eyed. At first, when Sako began to speak, they were distracted, and knew not what to do, thinking it could only end in blood. Then by degrees the words of Sako lent them enthusiasm, his simple word that went straight to their hearts. He seemed to them to be speaking thoughts of their own that they heard somewhere or other, where or how they could not remember. And by degrees their fear vanished, and they were seized, bewitched, and dazzled by this manly figure, whose strong, clear voice had such gentle tones, whose pale face looked so noble, his eyes so great and shining, his armour so lustrous, as he sat, tall as a giant, on his white steed, bathed in the

silver moonlight. He seemed to them like a vision, a sudden appearance, come they knew not how nor whence, powerful, shining, supernatural. They seemed in a dream, too,—the dream of a beautiful legend, in the calm night, whose silence thrilled with the clear musical voice and the fervent words that promised happiness.

And in the general silence, when Sako's last words died away like a vibrating chord, a woman's voice, a melancholy, dreamy voice, exclaimed :

"Ah, if thou art the angel Gabriel came down from Heaven, take, oh, take my soul ! Death at thy hands were sweet to me !"

Some time after Sako ordered the caravan to continue on its way, and when all had obeyed, and the file began to move, Sako addressed them once more

"Know that I am Tchello !"

There were exclamations of surprise and joy in the caravan, they knew that name, they had often heard it sung.

"I am Tchello. Go, and from village to village, from city to city, tell every one all that I have said, all that you have seen"

And whilst his steed, impatient, pranced beneath him, he ordered his two *aspataks* to conduct the caravan through the pass, which was dangerous, and then return to him.

And he drew his horse's reins. The beautiful beast pawed the ground, and reared lightly once or twice, twitched its fiery nostrils, stood up a moment on its hind legs, startled at the sudden noise of its rider's arms, and then galloped forward towards the limits of

the valley, which looked strangely white, all flooded with moonlight.

"Azrail! O my God, Azrail!"* they murmured in the caravan, stupefied, and shedding tears of ecstasy, as if drunken with a magic dream.

* The Angel Gabriel, in Arabic or Turkish

PART III

CHAPTER I

IN LITTLE ARMENIA

THERE were about a dozen men in a room in the Armenian quarter of Marzovan. The night was dark and gloomy. The chamber was small and simply furnished. A lighted lamp stood on a round table in the middle of the room. In one corner was a small bookcase well filled.

"Léon and Zhirair are late, I think," said a young man anxiously, looking at the others with a question in his eyes.

"In these days," came the answer, "it is surprising that one of us is not arrested every moment."

"Yes, but I'd rather it was not Léon nor Zhirair, rather I than they!" answered the first speaker.

"Roobèn is right, Roobèn is right," chimed in several voices.

"Of course he is right," assented the second young man. "There are not too many men like Léon; he comes of the best stock of our people, and I daresay we could not find three as good as he is amongst all his, our college friends."

"Bravo, David! He's right!" exclaimed several voices.

Just at that moment the door of the room opened, and Zhirair entered, accompanied by a young man. It was Léon. He was of middle height, broad-shouldered, and deep-chested; his manner was quiet, though he had a curious, persistent trick of stroking his short beard and the chestnut hair which fell away from a noble, intellectual brow. His hazel eyes were, as it were, veiled with a soft, pensive expression, which, without being sentimental, had a certain caressing effect.

After greeting the others, Léon took a seat near the table and said, as he drew a large envelope out of his pocket: "I have letters here which must have instant attention and discussion, they treat of the means to be taken to meet the present crisis."

He handed the letter to Roobèn, who was secretary to the committee. He opened it, and began to read it aloud.

At that time, in the spring of 1893, for more than a year, everywhere in Little Armenia a most rigorous persecution had prevailed. Cæsarea, Yozgat, Sivas, Amassia, and other towns with their surrounding villages, had become the scenes of open brigandage and cold-blooded murder on the part of the officials, the police, the Turkish soldiers, and the gangs of *bashi-bâzouks*. The prisons were filled with Armenians, whilst in the mosques the Mullahs were openly preaching a holy war against the infidels, inciting the Mussulmans to fulfil the command of the Koran and trample underfoot the lives of the rebellious and traitorous Armenian *raïas*. In the face

of such doings there was, of course, terrible excitement among the Armenians in every direction, and there were eager cries that the time was ripe for open warfare against the Government.

When the inhabitants of the eighty-two towns and villages of Little Armenia woke up on the morning of the 26th December 1892, they were astonished to see placards stuck on the walls of their houses, as well as on those of the official buildings, and even on the mosques and minarets—placards in the Turkish tongue, calling upon the followers of Mahomet to put an end to the insupportable situation created by the Sultan's Government. The placards had been distributed and put up in all these places in a single night, and this could only be due to the action of a large and powerful organisation, with ramifications in the remotest corners of the country. The Government was staggered by the blow. Although suspicion fell at first upon the Mohammedans, here also was a plausible pretext to start a savage chase of the Armenians. The Government had been already alarmed by the victories gained by detachments of Armenian *aspataks* under the leadership of Tchello, of Minas, of Tzaroukian, and others, against the Ottoman forces. It turned from the Mohammedans and fell upon the towns and more considerable villages with its full fury, and began to hunt down the Armenian revolutionary committees. The most extravagant orders were issued and the most cruel forms of punishment invented, and those were exercised freely upon the Armenians by the commonest *saptié* or soldier, or even by private individuals among the Mohammedans.

Severe orders were given to the Armenians to spy upon one another, and all who abstained from denouncing any one were looked upon as secret enemies of the Government. This legalised system of espionage and denunciation produced a state of extreme misery among the Armenians. The father was distrusted by his son, the son by the father, brother by brother, comrade by comrade, and friends by their friends. A state of panic, defiance, and suspicion became general, exciting and irritating the mind, and poisoning all family relations, stealing into every heart, and destroying the very health of the soul. Yet the Government gained by it to this extent, that instead of seeking out the revolutionaries, they simply had to order the arrest of their brothers, their parents, their sons, or even to their wives, who were often imprisoned with their newborn babes. And sometimes for months and months these unhappy and innocent victims endured the vilest outrages, the cruellest agonies and torture, with the object of extracting "confessions" with regard to the affairs of their fathers or husbands, their sons or brothers; or of obtaining information as to the whereabouts of the revolutionaries.

The town of Marzovan did not escape the common fate, and the Government had succeeded, towards the spring of 1893, in exasperating everybody in it to the highest pitch of rage, when, in various places, a certain number of revolutionaries succeeded in escaping from prison. The letters read at the meeting of the committee of Marzovan were filled with the details of these facts; indeed, a passage in one letter caused immediate and general consternation. Warning was

given that, owing to a denunciation made in another town (and the name of the informer was revealed), the authorities were on the track of Léon. Zhirair leapt from his place.

"I propose that we put an end to this traitor," he cried, bringing his fist down on the table. There was a sinister gleam in his eyes, and he was quivering all over. "I know very well," he went on, after a brief pause, "that, in the goodness of his heart, Léon will advise us not to take this measure, but it is our plain duty to keep him safe and sound among us. He is the leader of all our forces in Little Armenia, and both his presence among us and his counsels are really indispensable, especially in such stormy times as these."

There was general applause. However Léon interposed calmly.

"What's the good? You may suppress the informer, but you cannot suppress the information."

Zhirair scowled beneath his thick brows.

"We must suppress the traitor, anyhow," he cried; "he deserves the severest punishment, and, meantime, let us try to put the pursuers off the scent."

"It is a necessity, is it not?" interposed David, whose eyes shone in his meagre face; "we must suppress informers at all costs. There is no other alternative; we must make a striking example of this man if we are to prevent further denunciations. In a situation like ours, a policy of terrorising is absolutely called for by the force of circumstances; it is a necessary evil, of course, but an indispensable weapon."

"I agree with David," declared Roobèn.

"Bravo, David!" exclaimed Zhirair, "well spoken!"

"Of course I understand perfectly that such acts are not to be done on principle," said Léon thoughtfully. "Necessity drives us to a course only justifiable in a time of active open warfare. But the reason will serve when our history comes to be written. If there is any way of avoiding such acts, and yet achieving the immediate success of our aims, by all means let us take that way, and allow one more coward to live among all the other cowards who can't really hurt our Cause in the end—or, at least, only partially, and for a little time. The situation is a very grave one at present, let us give our country the first place in our thoughts, for the day may come, sooner or later, when we may not only lose a Léon, but the whole of our organisation."

The discussion went on for some time, and almost every one took part in it. Then measures to be taken by the committee in order to conceal all traces of Léon were agreed on.

The reading of the letters went on.

The man they called Léon was really Barsègh Zakariantz, a native of Russian Armenia. The Ottoman Government had only one name for him, *Fessad-Bashi*, the Rebel Chief, and this name was a terror to official circles. For some time his situation in Marzovan had been critical, and several times he had only just escaped arrest; but he would not listen to his comrades, who begged him to seek safety by quitting Turkish territory. He stayed on, leading an active, persevering, indefatigable life. He allowed himself no rest. His every action betrayed

a whole-hearted love of the Cause. With patient, unswerving attention he would examine into every incident that concerned it (whether it arose within or without the organisation), and eagerly consider every possibility that presented itself in every part of Little Armenia. He spent much time and much energy in frequent meetings, and was indefatigable in the reorganisation of old groups and the formation of new groups of *aspataks*. In everything he did he showed the same earnestness, the same enthusiasm. In everything he said and did he proved himself, pioneer as he was, a man of clear and solid convictions, one that mingled cool reason with warmth of feeling, and while he knew very well that the revolutionary method must be a terrible one, knew also that history had mapped out an inevitable path for revolutions. Always in danger, he toiled on without ceasing. Possessed of an impartial, frank, and serious mind, and a good, tender, loving heart, he worked modestly and quietly, always ready to meet death without surprise, like one resolved to fulfil his plain vocation; or rather, like one who recognised and took the honest road, traced out by the passing hour of history before every man of conscience. Sometimes at their meetings he would be stirred to speak in his fine, direct style, his face lit with enthusiasm, his gentle eyes shining for the moment with spiritual fires. And then he no longer seemed a simple mortal standing up before his comrades, but became in their eyes a hero, a prophet. His impressive sincerity of speech, like some high priest's solemn denunciation, smote the evils of the time, as he testified against the latter days of shame,

the national misfortunes, the iniquities of life as it was—that made the work and sufferings of the millions the condition of the repose and luxury of the few. But when occasion arose for him to speak prophetically of the future—of the time when the natural progress of historical development through material forms would have overcome all obstacles, and when inevitably, sooner or later, the radiant day of universal happiness should dawn upon mankind—his voice would grow quieter and more gentle, his eyes would be veiled by the intensity of his feeling, and the last words would die away like the last breath of a glorified soul in a long murmur, in the midst of the awed silence of the meeting.

The reading of the letters went on. They came to those that concerned the five hundred Armenians arrested on account of the placards. The description of their sufferings was long and heart-rending. Many had been put to the most barbarous tortures. Their cry of distress to their brethren was terrible to hear. In another letter followed an endless list of the names of those who had been denounced. Other letters brought news of the massacres at Cæsarea, at Efkéré, and other districts. The miserable series of monstrosities committed by the Government seemed as if it would never end.

Those present were almost stupefied with horror. They were unable to utter a single word, and dully, as if in a nightmare, they listened to the trembling voice of the reader. Could it really be true? Unhappily, there was not a doubt of it, for these letters had been brought to them from the prisoners themselves by those who had been on the scene of the

massacres. They were written in tears and suffering—nay, in blood. And when the reading ended, there was still a mournful, leaden silence; every face was white and sombre, every tongue mute.

“My God!” exclaimed Zhirair, suddenly breaking the silence, “after this, what Armenian would not turn a revolutionary? What Armenian could be so vile as to turn traitor? What Armenian would not cherish hatred and revenge in his heart?”

He trembled in every limb with rage as he stood before them with bloodshot eyes in a death-white face, his frail body convulsed, stamping and gesticulating in his agony of mind.

His cry roused them all out of their stupor. Each man gave several vent to his anger. Suddenly, David, with an excited face full of emotion, leapt from his chair, and, turning to Léon and Zhirair, said, amidst general attention:

“For what day and what need am I hoarding my strength and my life? Here I am ready to do what you will, to go where you will, and when you will. The great day, the great red day of blood, is surely at hand. Let me go and join Minas and Tckello, and, with the help of their groups, try and set free the prisoners of Angora. It may be dangerous, it may be impossible, but if I don’t succeed, I can but perish in the Cause, and my death will at least be a good example to our people!”

Zhirair applauded loudly. But Léon held that the failure of such an enterprise was only too certain, for the prison of Angora is one of the strongest, and a foolhardy attack might even end in aggravat-

ing the severity of the prisoners' treatment. Several among them were comrades already condemned to death, and it was probable that, if the enterprise failed, many more would be sent to the scaffold.

There was a prolonged discussion on the subject, till, by degrees, other questions were introduced, each more burning than the last. Resolutions were passed, votes were taken. Several of the members were inclined to decisive action that would bring on a general insurrection. They were of opinion that the time was ripe. Zhirair supported this view.

"From every part of the country we are warned that things are getting worse, that the situation is growing graver. The Government, like a horde of conquering barbarians, goes on laying waste the country, as it has done ever since the conquest of Armenia, more than five centuries ago. Our people are now face to face with ruin. They must perish if the present state of things is to go on. But their whole hearts are with us, and would be with us in a rising, too. The Government is trying to weaken them by terrorising the revolutionaries. And I say again, that we must at once communicate with the Central Committee, and with all the committees of the Party, and invite them to consider a resolution in favour of general and immediate action."

But the applause that greeted these words of Zhirair was mingled with protests.

"Our fighting companions are not yet ready for decisive, general action," said Léon thoughtfully. "Unhappily, we have not enough arms, and even the means of getting arms are insufficient, and in some cases there is no present possibility of procuring

them. No doubt, if our fighting force had been sufficiently organised, we should have had nothing to do but to await a favourable moment, when the Government happened to be embroiled with risings in Arabia, or Crete, or even in trouble with one of the European powers,—and to strike. But at the present stage we are at it is most important for us not to fritter our force away in small outbreaks here and there—except for the actions of the *aspataks*, of course; meantime, we must push on the organisation of our fighting companions as fast as possible."

He was silent. Although he was against immediate general action, he felt a sudden uneasiness at the bottom of his heart. He had a vague foreboding of the near approach of days of blood. The whole atmosphere throughout the country was charged with this apprehension of something formidable, like the uneasy presentiment of a gathering storm. And then, no one knew; perhaps these days of blood might defer the triumph of his people's Cause, at any rate, for years to come! And his secret uneasiness increased; he said no more, after stating his opinion that the committees should be consulted on the subject. Zhirair now got up and bade farewell to the members of the committee, saying that he must start for Yozgat on his way to Cæsarea, and through Cilicia.

The name of Cilicia awoke distant recollections in Léon's mind. More than a year before he had left Geneva, where he had been a student, and made his way to Mersina. Here he had been arrested the day of his arrival. He exacted his release as the subject of another Power, but only on condition that he quitted

Ottoman territory. He had done so. But after leaving Mersina he succeeded in entering Turkey again from another side, at Alexandretta. From there he had travelled as far as Aintab. And he recalled one day, several weeks after his arrival, when the Armenian inhabitants, having heard of the presence of an emissary of the Party within their walls, collected in a large crowd outside the house where he was staying. And this crowd made a sympathetic demonstration, fearing neither police nor soldiers, and only desiring to see him, whom they called "The Preacher of Liberty." No, thought Léon, those enthusiastic people, thrilling with life, have not achieved their destiny yet. That might have to come through blood, but they would reach their goal at last. And a secret ardour flamed in his eyes.

CHAPTER II

ON SHIP-BOARD

NEXT evening the meeting was resumed. But this time there was a general feeling of excitement and enthusiasm. Conversation was exceedingly animated. The talk turned upon a certain significant event, which had taken place in one of the Turkish ports.

"It was a bold stroke; and the circumstances in which Voork was placed, and the way in which he escaped out of the hands of the police and the Government, are unique, and without any precedent in our revolutionary movement. I am jealous of his deed." So spoke David, and his little eyes shone, whilst he stroked his beard.

"And you got this news to-night?" asked a young man, addressing Léon.

"To-night," replied he, "and the thing only happened two weeks ago."

"But it is worth a fortune to us to have such a man in our Party," said Roobèn thoughtfully, "and as far as I know, there is no one who could take his place. . . . The loss of such a man would have been a bad blow to the Cause."

"That goes without saying!" cried Stépan, a young man of spirit, active and enthusiastic. "Voork holds an important post in the Party, no one else could take his place."

All agreed, and went on to discuss the details, and to comment upon some rather amusing particulars of Voork's arrest, and there was much laughter over the imbecility of the Turkish officials.

And this is the tale of Voork's arrest :—

Several weeks before, a young man of about twenty-six years of age was to be seen pacing up and down the deck of a steamer bound from Alexandria to Constantinople. His broad shoulders and wide chest were covered by a grey overcoat, and his black, round hat was worn well over his eyebrows, which were slight but well marked, and from beneath them his eyes looked out with a certain fixity of attention, but with an honest and frank expression. He walked with a firm step, his hands in his great-coat pockets, paying no attention to his surroundings, gazing upon the limitless stretches of the sea. He spoke several European tongues well, and the other travellers took him for an European. However, he spoke little, and that only to those whose acquaintance he could hardly avoid making, and when any one else attempted to enter into conversation with him, he contented himself with a few dry laconic replies. But several of the travellers—a Greek doctor, an English lawyer, and two commercial men, one a Jew and the other an Austrian—all from Egypt, had already felt distinctly drawn to him. The carriage, looks, face, and figure of the young fellow had struck the four travellers from the first. They could not

help watching him when he came on deck. 'His peculiar appearance was at once attractive and repellent. Something undefined lay concealed behind his rather stiff, grave air. Yet under this garment of gravity a very tender heart was hidden, ready for any sacrifice in the cause of friendship or the good of others. And his intimates knew him to be of an original and decided character, firm almost to obstinacy. Whole-hearted in his nation's cause, devoted to the ideal of universal fraternity, he never ceased for a moment to toil, like a labourer, for the Cause, always working for a solution to the problems and difficulties of the national revolutionary movement, sacrificing the whole of his material fortune (which was not small), and always awaiting the day when he must also sacrifice his life. His life! that was of small moment to him, and he would give away his last shirt to clothe a comrade who was in need. He often got angry in discussion, and they who did not know him well took exception to his taciturn airs, his rather brusque manner of speech, and his way of accentuating each word, saying what he had to say bluntly, and coming directly to the point. For his was one of those rare, frank natures, that neither fear persons nor love phrases.

This character was well expressed in his manner of life. He had his code of morality, and it was severe, and he deduced it, in his logical way, from the exigencies of the revolutionary Cause. This was a theme that he often loved to dwell on among his comrades, saying :

"In his private, daily life, in his way of living, eating, and speaking, the true revolutionary ought to

be a constant example to those who surround him—to the people. "It is by such examples," he would say, raising his clear voice, "that the revolutionary feeling reaches the soul of those, at any rate, who wish to work for the people's good—of all who can wholly see and understand."

Voork himself lived up to this code, almost pedantically. Born in Russian Armenia, he was brought up, till he was of an age to enter the University with every care, by rich parents, but at the very outset of his student career he changed his whole way of life. He began by depriving himself of all the food and garments that he deemed superfluous, and with him this meant rigorous self-sacrifice. By degrees he went on in the same direction, till, having finished his studies at the University, he threw himself into the revolutionary movement, and then he gave himself no quarter. When it seemed necessary to him, or inevitable, he would sleep night after night for weeks on a rug on the floor, poorly clad, thinly covered, a hard pillow under his head, his health, however, was so good and vigorous, that it was never in any danger, he lived upon bread and cheese, and a cup or two of tea or coffee. He was the deadly foe of alcohol and tobacco and cards, and all sorts of games, even the simplest. He preached against love, in any form, because, he said, "it divided the heart of the revolutionary in two"—a thing which must never happen. And he went further still, being an enemy to all conventions and himself a Stoic, he was intolerant of any negligence, especially on the part of conspicuous revolutionaries.

The boat breasted the waves bravely, those

turquoise waves of the Bosphoros. As Voork stood on the deck, his eyes on the distance, the panorama of Constantinople was gradually displayed before him. A green background and a crowd of white houses, mosques and minarets that lost themselves in the sky, and beyond that more green, stretching away in thick luxuriant growth. And at various points, high up, as if suspended above the enormous world of waters, palace on palace appeared, like lacework for delicacy and grace, and castles bathed in the dazzling whiteness of the spring sunshine, standing splendid and sumptuous against the blue background of the deep heavens, proud and insolent in their mysterious solitude.

"There dwells the prisoner of Yildiz, the assassin," thought Voork. He gazed upon the region of Galata, and the aspect of the people's quarters rose before him. Over there, in dirt and mud, in misery and shame, in corruption and ignominy, the crowd was huddled, thronging and crawling in the tumult and petty squabbling of every day; the masses who worked and sweated, who robbed and stole, who were tainted, those who suffered, who were exploited, bestialised, and crushed. There, too, dwell others, charlatans, parvenus, ignoble upstarts, who contrived to rise at the price of hundreds of spoilt lives, to grow rich and to build gorgeous mansions between the double splendour of the eternal azure of the sea and sky. While all around was the noisome, rotting swamp of life, where thought and spirit foundered. And in this big city a heavy atmosphere weighed upon everything and everybody, stifling, bewildering, and corrupting all, whether they lay in wretched

poverty, or passed their days in softness and luxury, in proud and imbecile self-content.

"A den of robbers, a den of thieves, a den of them that slay the soul," thought Voork bitterly. "And behold the victims," he thought, as he saw the crowd of Armenian emigrants, working like ants in the harbour. "A den," he murmured to himself, as he suddenly bethought him of the Armenian patriarch, the officials in high places, the rich Armenians in the city, and all the upstarts in literature and of the Press, who swarmed and hustled one another, complaisant in the great men's clutches. "A den, a den," Voork repeated to himself, and turning his head away seawards, he was overcome by inexpressible weariness of heart.

The glittering, laughing waves curled lightly. Lightly they were flung away from the sides of the boat. Lightly, too, and furtively, the balmy spring breeze glided over the surface of the waves. The broad waters were smiling and sparkling as with the light of a thousand golden stars; they reflected, as in a mirror, with a fairy glamour, the shining beauty of the shores, as they rippled on to meet the land. The Golden Horn, curved like the crescent moon, before him shone, as it were, a wall of glaring metal, dazzling in the gold dust of the sunlight. But beneath the waters how mute, invisible, and mysterious everything was!

"There is death there at the bottom," said Voork to himself, as he looked down on the bulwarks. "It is beneath these glittering waters that they drown and stifle toil and tears, protests, justice, life, ideals, happiness, and the possibilities of the future."

And the chill lugubrious sensation of such a death passed over him. He seemed to hear a smothered cry, a shriek of despair, suddenly sounding across the barren surface of laughing waves, and then as quickly choked down there, in the watery depths. And he had a kind of vision. In those deeps he seemed to see corpses floating in the seaweeds, among the many coloured pebbles—corpses unnumbered, blue and wan, with gashed throats and torn flesh. And these human bodies had been sunk there by human hands, sunk in the silent and sinister obscurity of night, man requiring the life of his brother man, shedding streams of blood to defile the liquid transparency of the sea.

When at length the boat stopped, Voork disembarked. He entered the city, and at Galata he discovered that he was being followed. As if he scented the pack behind him he suddenly turned and looked back. A few paces off, in the crowd of passers-by, he observed a small person whose eyes were fixed upon him. "That's the man," thought Voork, and with a firm step he walked on in the same direction as before. Arriving at last before a small, modest-looking house, he stopped, and again turned round suddenly. The little man was still following him, but seeing Voork had caught sight of him, he made a feint of turning down a neighbouring street, and did so, in point of fact. But when Voork, who had a rendezvous in the house before which he stood, walked on a little way and stopped again, he was not surprised to see the same little man, issuing from another street, and coming this time to meet him. With the same long, firm stride Voork went straight up to him, and said in a brusque but calm voice, and in Turkish :

"You are following me, you are a spy!"

The other was taken by surprise; he muttered a few words in his confusion, and stopped short.

"I advise you to go back at once whence you came! If you continue to follow me, your punishment will be severe, do you hear?" Voork uttered this threat gravely.

The other did not reply immediately, and only became more and more confused; at last he stammered out in a plaintive, tearful voice:

"Pardon, *effendi* . . . What can I do? I am out of work and without a farthing, and I have a family of five children"

"You are an Armenian?"

"Yes, *effendi*."

"Well, be off with you."

A light shone in the fellow's eyes; he was glad to get off so easily, for Voork's stern face had filled him with terror. With a faltering step he turned, and was already some paces away when Voork, looking after him, called him back.

"Listen to me," he said, gazing keenly into the other's eyes, "is it true, what you say, that necessity obliged you to hire yourself out as a hound to the police?"

The little man insisted, and swore to it.

"Very well, take that," said Voork, putting several silver coins into his hand, "but on one condition, that you cease to ply this vile trade. This money will serve to keep your family for a week; during that time you must seek some honest employment."

One morning, two weeks later, great commotion and agitation reigned in one of the southern ports of

Turkey. Many streets, peaceful enough as a rule except for the noise of commerce, bore a strange aspect in the brilliant sunshine of that troubled morning.

"A great man, a revolutionary chief, has arrived in this city," they were saying right and left in whispers. Turks, Greeks, and Armenians had crowded into the streets in front of the houses and shops, men, women, and children, all turning with eagerness to get even a glimpse of "the great stranger," whom even the authorities treated with respect, for he openly rebuked them in the port and in the streets, threatening them with a terrible vengeance if they dared to lay hands on him. He had threatened the *mutessarif* himself and all the rest of them, saying proudly that *his* Government would not support such an outrage upon one of its subjects on the part of the Sultan's officials.

"He had lots of papers in his pocket," an old woman was saying, in front of a house door, surrounded by some scores of people. "When they were going to search him, he protested so loudly and used such threats, that *zaptié*, *tchavoosh*, *onbashi*, *mutessarif*, and all, were in a devil of a fright."

All listened open-eyed.

"But one thing startled every one! Ah, my God! the mere thought of it makes one shudder! They found he was holding in his hand an infernal machine. A *tchavoosh* told me he held it so—in his hand—and that he makes bombs with it, and that every one sprang away from him. This great man must be a devil himself," pursued the old woman, amidst the general attention and terror which pervaded all those who harkened to her. "Yes, a devil—and so of course

he was not afraid, and only laughed at the *tchavooshes* and *mutessarif*, and said it was a machine for photography."

"Oh, a machine for photography," murmured several voices incredulously, and the speakers chuckled.

A moment's silence followed. Consternation sat upon the crowd.

"He is a very great man, so they say," continued the old woman, and it might have been Voork's own nurse that spoke, "he must be a man with a titled name. He has that kind of face and manner that makes every one else seem awkward beside him . . . the *mutessarif* dare not interfere with a stranger like that." The old woman smacked her lips, and jerked her little eyes right and left with a keen, cold look.

"Well, but where has he gone just now with the *mutessarif* and the other officials?" asked a young man in the crowd, who had listened with deep interest.

"Ah, you see, the stranger wished to go before the *vali*, he wanted to speak to the *vali*; he said the officials had behaved scandalously, and he would insist upon having the guilty parties punished," the same old woman replied again with energy, and she clenched her withered and bony fists.

Just at that moment a group of *saptiés* mounted on horseback came past, galloping fast, and shouting to the groups gathered here and there in the middle of the wide road, busy talking over the question of the day. One of the horses, in passing, jostled an old man, and stretched him on the ground, senseless, in the road. No one paid any heed to him; but when the horses, still galloping, were already far away, and

had almost disappeared behind the cloud of dust, a few people left the groups and began to run after them; a few more soon followed them, and soon their numbers grew. Next there was a mass of people running, like the waves of a river, and uttering cries and exclamations, some in foolish delight, others in instinctive terror, going on, running mechanically, without reason, like sheep merely following the flock.

The same day, towards evening, a most upsetting piece of intelligence went the round of the town. It was said that the great stranger had been invited to sup with the *mutessarif* himself.

The people, Turks as well as the Greeks and Armenians, already honoured and glorified this unknown stranger. Legends were forming about the name of Voork. He was a hero, physically and morally proud and strong, a Rustam, a Zohrab, like those heroes of Oriental legend—bold, invincible, and magnanimous. But, above all, the “infernal machine” of Voork had made a deep impression on everybody. It was only a simple photographic camera, but no one dared to touch it except himself. They thought none but a hero could carry it like a plaything. When the news spread of the invitation to supper, groups collected again all about the place. They were pitying Voork, especially the women, who were sighing and even shedding tears, unseen, whispering that the *mutessarif* would certainly pour a few drops of poison into the coffee or the syrup he offered to Voork, or else have his throat cut in the night, and his body thrown into the river.

“O my God!” they said, “the Falcon will be slain, lost——”

The simple reflection never seemed to enter their heads that Yoork could be arrested like other folk. Arrested! He? It was not possible to arrest such a man. He came of a princely family; he had a guardian angel; he knew all the wiles of the Evil One, and could make the *mutessarif* his lackey. 'If he made an appeal, every brave fellow in the land would rally round him; he could turn the country of the *Osmanlis* upside down! Was he not one of the world's sages, too, against whose wisdom five of the most famous *dervishes* could not hold their own? Finally, had he not threatened the *padishah* himself to his face that he would snatch Mecca from his grasp?

After the agitation and uncertainty of the night, it became known the next day that the stranger had gone off by boat early in the morning. And once more the rumours ran from mouth to mouth among the *tcharvooshes* and the *onbashis*. It was told that, as he parted with the *vali* and the *mutessarif*, "the people's saviour" had counselled them to govern the country well, to make good laws, to make concessions with a good grace, if they did not wish to cause a revolution to break out. He had told the *vali* and the *mutessarif* that they were only ignorant brutes, and no one had dared to gainsay him; the *mutessarif* had even begged him to carry no complaints against him, for he was only doing his duty, obeying orders from higher powers. Finally, from the ship's deck, the hero had cursed a country where the people suffered injustice and oppression, and died of hunger in the last stage of misery; he had also threatened to break the yoke of the barbarians and raise a kingdom of the people.

Thus Voork became a splendid though momentary vision. In the fashion of a hero of old he had appeared before the eyes of the suffering masses, to bring them hope, courage, and energy for the future ; to bring consolation for present evils, to inspire enthusiasm and living faith in happiness. And for years and years this vision grew more wonderful in the imagination of the masses, and Voork was remembered as an apostle of Goodness, of Courage, of Greatness, crowned with glory, and beautiful as the Southern sun. The vision became majestic in stature, an image of revolt for the people's good ; and they admired and loved it, desiring its speedy reappearance ; and in an enchantment that consoled, and a delicious fascination, they murmured over and over a thousand times the marvellous name of Voork

CHAPTER III

MOONLIGHT

THE moonlight of springtime was flooding in a silver stream the village of X—— Every one was sleeping, warm and tired, and happy. The mountains stood silent and pensive, the gardens were full of a soft, whispering, melancholy, the houses hid among the trees. The moon smiled down into the pure, still mirror of a fountain, and the moonlight gave a tender, blue tint to the deep, mysterious vault of heaven, sown with a myriad stars. A few swans, proud-necked, and with delicate white breasts, like pieces of mother-of-pearl, basking as it were in the moonlight, floated on the water, slumbering gently, soothed by the fugitive sounds and furtive whispers of the night. From all directions the nightingales were trilling with a sound sonorous as that of metal, but crystal-pure. The light, balmy wind flitted hither and thither, rustling gently in the leafy plane-tree, whose lofty, straight topmost boughs waved slowly, as if in deep dreams.

All along the garden wall fruit trees were ranged, decked like brides, with pure silver blossoms, white

as flakes of snow. Their odour seized the senses, like incense, and floated away on the scented wings of the breeze. Underneath one of the trees, by the side of the wall, a man had taken his station, mounted on a beautiful black charger. The moonlight filtered through the blossoms, and made little shining stars on the rider's armour—a pliant figure, dressed in the *Laze* costume, and seated on his horse close to the wall; he was leaning over to the other side. There a slight, young girl was standing motionless in the moonlight on a large stone; she was clad all in white, with a large muslin handkerchief tied over her head, and looked like a *naïve* vision of springtime. The delicate rose-colour on her cheeks, and her great black eyes, proved that she was alive, though her pose was that of sculptured marble. Her tender, melancholy looks were fixed on those of the man, and he too was young. Their moment of happiness had made them dizzy. Silent both, and with locked hands, they hardly seemed to draw breath, but to listen to the wild beating of each other's hearts, as they gazed upon one another with unsatisfied, unsated looks.

"Ah, you are going! you are going!" the young girl faltered at last in a sad voice that trembled to tears.

"But I must go, you know I must."

"But it is not enough—hardly a month since you came, and we have seen each other so little, so little." She spoke in lingering accents, and with downcast eyes.

"But I don't belong to myself, my beautiful one, nor to you," he added, lowering his voice; "I belong to Armenia first of all."

The young girl remained silent. Her hands lay lifelessly in those of the rider, who pressed them tenderly. After a prolonged silence, a sudden anxiety shone in the young girl's eyes, and deep sadness settled on her beautiful face.

"But suppose you don't come back?" she stammered.

"Not come back," he echoed in uncertain tones, and ceased speaking. He could distinctly hear the strong, wild throbs of her heart, and her hand trembled in his. Just then the breeze fluttered down the petals of the blossoms above them, and the moonlight shimmered on her tears.

"What put that foolish thought into your head?" he said at last, rather bitterly.

"What?" she replied pensively. "What indeed?" And her voice broke; she was troubled and seemed to be in pain.

"Shall I tell you?" she asked timidly, after a pause, raising her great, dreamy eyes to his.

He, impatient and full of surmises, pressed the young girl's hand against his breast.

"The other day," she whispered sadly, "I lost—your ring."

"My ring!" exclaimed the rider.

She nodded sorrowfully.

"Yes, the ring you gave me, and you said when you gave it to me that I was to keep it next my heart till the day of our betrothal," and her head fell on her breast, and she drew deep, sobbing breaths.

For a few moments he was gloomy and silent.

"Well, after all, it's no matter, love," he said consolingly; "the knot that binds our hearts together is

no weaker," and he touched the hair of his betrothed in a tender caress.

But she seemed deeply troubled, and as she stood silent with downcast eyes, was secretly much agitated. Suddenly she shuddered, and in a tearful voice, she began to tell him all about it. The other day she had gone to the stream, she felt the ring slipping on her finger, it kept slipping, and all of a sudden it fell, struck against a stone, and rolled into the deep pool. Oh, how she mourned for her ring, how she wailed in her distress! She had searched and searched for it, here, there and everywhere. But there was no ring to be seen. And she prayed to the good God, and she made a hundred vows to the Devil (who had certainly taken the ring), and she recited charms, but there was no ring, no ring anywhere. It was lost for ever and ever.

"Oh, my beloved, I pray you," she cried, nestling close against the young man's breast, "I beseech you to be careful. You see, it is a bad omen to lose one's ring before the betrothal, they say it is a sign that the betrothal will never take place, that one's life is in some imminent danger."

And she went on talking in this strain, telling over all the presentiments of evil that had tortured her during long, sleepless nights. The young man tried to console her with loving and tender words.

It was far too soon, he said, to weep over his grave, for he meant to come back out of all danger, safe and sound, in a year's time, and carry her off to the betrothal on his fine horse, amid the shouts and the fireworks of the market-place. But she was barely reassured by the charm of his caressing words,

and no sooner did he cease speaking than she was seized again by troubling thoughts and anxiety. Yes, but that was not all, there were other things as well that had frightened her. Some days ago she went out into the garden, one fine morning, towards her favourite tree—this was a little cherry-tree, that stood apart and solitary, covered with white blossoms, like a vision of innocence. She went up to her tree. Numbers of dew-drops were trembling on its blossoms, thousands of dew-drops, sparkling in the morning sun. She walked several times round the cherry-tree looking at it and admiring it, but just as she turned to go away, her arm touched the low hanging branches, and the dew-drops fell fast all over her like tears. When she felt them, she had said, trembling all over—“Oh, my God, I shall never see my betrothal; when I put on all my white things, I shall be weeping like this tree.” And she wept that morning under that very tree, wept long and bitterly.

The youth listened, impressed in spite of himself by her story, and when she had ended, he was quite saddened for a time.

“It is all imagination, my pretty,” he stammered at last, with a frown, “only imagination; you must not think of such things.”

But the young girl had covered her face with her hands, and was crying softly:

“Look, my beautiful one, look, my angel, look at the sky; the stars are lighting the night for us because of our love, and so they will light us to our betrothal. Oh! do not dim your bright eyes. I shall take the image of them with me in my heart, that beats for you only. They will be my guide in battle, love,

since I must leave you at home. Our hearts are bound together by the chain of love, and that chain must be your ring, my dove, and to-morrow the sunshine shall dry up your tears, darling."

And so murmuring, he took the young girl in his arms. Their faces were very close, and their longing lips met in a burning kiss.

"Ah, when will the day come when I shall crown your head with a 'rainbow'?"

"The crown used at betrothals!" exclaimed the young girl as she drew back and smiled at her lover. "Wait, take my necklace," she added hastily, "keep it always next your heart. I got the gipsy woman to tell your fortune. She said my betrothed was a brave man, and I must bind his heart with my pearl necklace, so that he should not forget me when he was away fighting, and that this necklace would bring him good luck. So take my necklace, and keep it always next your heart."

"You are my pearl, and the talisman of your love is the chain on my heart."

And while he continued to murmur loving words, the young girl's eyes suddenly flashed with fright; she uttered a feeble cry and hid her head against her lover's breast.

"What is it? what is it?" he asked anxiously.

She did not reply, but raised her eyes with the same fixed expression of fear. She had just seen two falling stars, which, one after the other, with beautiful fiery wakes, suddenly rent the sky and fell, disappearing into nothingness.

"My God, there are our two stars," she cried, suddenly seized with terror. She was trembling all over.

"Do not be frightened, our stars are shining still."

"No, they have just fallen, and that reminds me of a terrible thing, yes, a terrible thing that happened last year. I had almost forgotten it."

And still trembling, her voice often broken with the throbbing of her heart, she related how one day last year, everybody was talking about a brave young Armenian, who, passing by a village one morning on horse, saw a group of Turks preventing some poor Armenian travellers from letting their horses drink at the stream. At this the young man had become very angry, and in spite of the threats of the Mahomedan crowd, he had dismounted and had watered the Armenian horses himself. The Turks hurried off to the village, and the young man, after a little talk with the travellers, had sprung into his saddle to continue his journey, when about fifteen horsemen, shouting and gesticulating, poured out from the village and began to shoot at him. His horse bounded forward like an arrow, but in front the rider was met by a group of *saptiés*, also on horseback, who barred his road. And so between the two bands of his enemies the young fellow galloped on, till he reached the *saptiés*, when he fired his pistols, made a way for himself, and broke through them, disappearing into the distance like a flash. The villagers ran together at the sound of the shots, and declared he could have been no mere mortal, but St George himself, so brave and handsome was he.

The young girl stopped, half choked by emotion.

The night of that very day, when every one in the house was asleep, as they were now, she had gone out into the garden, seized with uneasiness and unable

to sleep. It was very dark. All at once, as her eyes roved over the fields, she saw a shining light, which seemed at first to wheel and wheel, turn and turn, and then to flare up, faster and faster, and all of a sudden died down and was extinguished.

"Ah," she cried, "my heart is breaking, it sighs so. —And next day when I told my mother about that, she was vexed and sad, and said to me, almost crying, 'Ah, my child, why were you not blind then, what an evil omen!' For that light was our Tzaroukian, who escaped by a miracle yesterday morning from the hands of the authorities. Yes, that light must have been he. It means that he will soon die.' Oh, no, no," exclaimed the girl, drowned in tears, and clinging to her lover, "oh, no, it cannot be that it was you, it must not be—tell me, tell me."

He denied it, in turn laughing, caressing, and consoling, but yet moved himself by the strange fancies of his betrothed. "No," he ended by saying; "I shall not die until I have done my duty by my people, until I have adorned you for our betrothal."

Besides, he bade her remember he was only saying farewell now for one short year. And, indeed, he was already lingering too long, for had he not shortly a great task to accomplish, was it not his task to deliver Tchello out of the hands of the enemy, Tchello, the pride of the Armenian *aspataks*, whose name was cherished by so many brave hearts? At this moment he was lying in prison, in chains, and in a fortnight he would be carried to Angora, where a shameful death on the gallows awaited him.

And at this thought the face of Tzaroukian grew dark. He had a guilty feeling, for at this moment

when the sword was hanging over Tchello's head, he, Tzaroukian, was still absent from his post, nor had he yet organised the attack he and his group were to make in order to save his people's hero. And this task belonged to him of all men, who by his deeds of courage and skill as an *aspatak*, had earned the name of "Tchello the Second"

Pensive, suffering from bitter secret conflict in his soul, irritated and angry with himself, and utterly absorbed in painful thought, Tzaroukian, with bowed head, seemed for a few moments to have forgotten the girl's presence, whilst she, with her timid looks fixed on him, hardly dared to breathe, and burned to hear his tender voice again. She pressed his hand, and he, suddenly turning his head towards her as if awakening from a stupor, felt his heart ache sorely. Seeing the young girl's face express profound suffering and despair, he was stirred to the depths of his soul. Love awoke him suddenly to sharp pain. Like an unexpected blow, he felt the tearing sensation of loss, of what he should suffer if his life was taken suddenly. In a flash this terrible, deadly thought passed through his head, as the last that should torture him in the prison dungeon, or on the field of battle, in the iron grasp of death. A cold shudder passed over him. He leant over the young girl, still trembling, and silently he took between his hands that beautiful head, and took it to his breast, deeply stirred by the sweet, fervent feeling of a sorrowful, unhappy love, whilst tears stood in his brown eyes. Like a timid deer, hiding against the rocks at the fateful sound of danger, like a complaining stream, gliding beneath its mossy banks, the young girl, divining instinctively the

troubles and secret struggles of her lover, clung to his breast, murmuring over him amidst her tears, laments, and tender consolation.

Overhead a nightingale suddenly broke forth into marvellous trills, and all nature, bathed in the pure moonlight, seemed suddenly to thrill, and the air was filled with the liquid, vibrating notes which as suddenly died away and were hushed. The swans, still half asleep upon the watery mirror, like molten silver now, glided on, swelling their sheeny breasts. The breeze rustled in the leaves of the plane-tree, and its topmost branches waved proudly, still lost in dreams. The breath of the blossoming trees floated up like incense, and laid a magic spell over the two lovers' hearts that were beating and beating, one against the other, as if they must break in this supreme farewell, so sweet, and yet so painful

CHAPTER IV

DEATH

ONE summer day three men on horseback were skirting the beautiful banks of the river Alis. Their handsome manly faces, a touch of haughtiness in their aspect, their *Laze* dress, their thoroughbreds with bushy manes, their weapons sparkling in the sunshine—everything about them carried the imagination back to the heroic times, whose spirit still hovers over the countryside. They were two *aspataks*, with Sako, the famous Tchéllo.

Beside them Alis roared, turbulent and foaming, with rolling waters tumbling against his rocky banks. This incessant noise mingled with the rhythmic tread of the horses who moved gaily, and with the song of birds that piped a thousand notes, filled the forest that covered the steep mountain-sides with a clear, intense, and bewildering babble. Between the mountain-tops, ranged on either side of the river, the southern sky glowed, deep blue, unbroken and dazzling.

Soothed by the voices of nature and by the warm, caressing breeze that came and went furtively, Sako was sad and silent, with thoughtful brows and eyes

fixed on the distance. Old memories were surging in his brain, some shadowy, and others more distinct, and yet others that were as clear to him as yesterday. Sweet or sad, inspiring or depressing, painful or proud, memories came, and went before Sako's eyes like a long, many-coloured ribbon, and made his heart ache. It was only five or six years since he had joined the revolutionary movement, then in its initial stages ; but how long this time seemed to him, —an interminable chain of events, shrouded in the misty past ! At first it had all resembled a heroic idyll, with a voice thundering out of the distance, crying aloud to the suffering people joyful news of a faith and a redemption : sometimes, too, the voice had seemed to chant softly, foretelling a prosperous future —happiness in a brotherhood stronger than blood or death. And this voice had pealed out full of power and inspiration, to thrill all hearts and plant the first enthusiasm, to point to the uphill road, to inflame all hearts with an invincible desire to fight for the right with a brave and hopeful outlook on the future. And this voice was that of Armenia, martyred and ground down beneath the heel of tyranny. It rang out from the Armenian hearts of those who, haggard-eyed, blinded by the sinister gleam of the sword that hung over their heads, had only dared to groan before, had never before ventured to cry out for redemption and happiness.

But all this had changed later on, and the idyll became a series of dramas. Enthusiasm was changed for action, which spread timidly at first and then more boldly, over the whole country at a feverish pace, carrying with it a wave of goodwill and a heartfelt

desire for justice. And many were seized by the general infection, which was indeed resisted only by those who threw themselves into the camp of the enemy. Then came the first armed resistance to the police, during arrests; the first opposition to the Kurds and to the armed forces of the tax collectors; the first popular demonstrations, even in the Ottoman capital, to protest against the bloody persecutions perpetrated, heretofore unchecked, by the authorities in the provinces. Then it was that the first blood flowed shed by Armenian soldiers for their country. The prison doors were opened wide and securely locked again upon scores, hundreds, and thousands of Armenians who disappeared, engulfed in an earthly hell, never to be seen again save as maimed cripples or mutilated corpses. Whole families, villages, provinces were swept away by persecution—that perennial plague that has never ceased to menace and to cruelly descend upon the unhappy country, and is ever ready upon any pretext to spill the blood of innocents and to blacken the dawn with the smoke of smouldering villages.

Instinctively Sako stiffened himself in his saddle. The fight was unequal, and yet inevitable; born of the people's woes, and the only way to happiness. And Sako had the sensation of a storm gathering in the distance and threatening to burst upon the country. He recalled the evening when he had first quitted Thoros. He saw himself in the harbour, watching the labourers, crushed, breathless, and bruised beneath the burden of enormous bales, whilst the thunder muttered in the distance, and the rising sea beat noisily on its shores. It seemed to him as if

the burden of the Armenian dock labourers was the symbol of their own life; and the whole scene, and the driving storm, hiding its fury as yet in the heavy clouds, seemed the presage of that other storm brewing throughout the land, and threatening the people on the morrow with its lightnings of terror and rain of blood.

Sako's face grew sombre. He felt in his soul the approach of this storm. After all, was it not inevitable? It seemed as if blood, ignominy, and sinister irony must darken the dawn of liberty, and the future must be bravely risked sooner or later.

But truly the idyll of the first days had changed to a drama, and was now turning to tragedy. At first a breath of revival went abroad, which swelled into rage, foretelling the hurricane of destruction which was to lay the land waste, but in the end to sweep away also the iniquitous—nay, barbarous—forms of a state, which bore in its body the seed of the future, and yet in that future was condemned to disappear. Tragedy? Sako repeated to himself, seized with sharp pain. Had not that tragedy begun with the fate of Tzaroukian, bravest of brave fellows, who had saved Sako's own life a year ago by attacking the escort which was bringing him to Angora? And he thought of the fate of the heroes, the friends of Tzaroukian, almost all in the flower of their youth; Gulbeng, incomparable in courage and temerity, and yet so modest; Mihrijan, laughing in battle and pleasant in speech; that giant with the guileless heart of a child, Panos; and lastly, Ohannès, with his ant-like activity, always contriving fresh stratagems; the fate of all these men devoted to the Cause seemed like big black clouds piling up

with a terrible menace. And Sako's eyes glowed with a sombre fire when he recalled in a vision the five gallows standing out with sinister effect against the pale sky, before the dawn on the 18th of July, less than two months before. They stood in the prison court of Angora, where, a year after the saving of Sako, Tzaroukian was confined with his four comrades, as though he had taken Sako's place. And towards dawn, when all the prisoners had been ranged in the court between two files of soldiers, expressly to be terrified by the spectacle of the fate of five of their bravest comrades, those condemned to death were brought forth, chained hand and foot, into the ghastly place; with proud undaunted looks and shining eyes they advanced. A long shudder passed through the ranks of the prisoners, and in the midst of their murmured rage, suddenly cries broke forth of "Long life to our Country and long life to the Revolution!" This supreme cry, torn from the breasts—from the inmost souls of the five condemned men, thrilled through the awful silence and startled an echo from the dumb walls of the prison. A moment after, five corpses were swinging, awfully, in the air.

Instinctively Sako closed his eyes. His heart burned for vengeance: he was possessed by a dull rage. He would take that vengeance by the deed he proposed to do down in Cilicia, whither he was guiding his horse at this instant, and particularly in Zeitun, in a general rising, in a storm of spirits in revolt. And the voices of his comrades broke in on his distant dreams.

"Why, there goes a small armed force," exclaimed the two *aspataks*, looking keenly in front of them down the valley.

Sako did not speak, but directed his field-glass towards a point where a black moving mass was to be seen topped with arms that glanced in the sunshine.

"Yes," he said simply, "there are, it seems to me, almost two hundred soldiers, some of them mounted, and the *Kaimakam* himself is leading them."

Sako and his companions were in a valley which widened out on one side, while on the other a naked rocky mountain rose up. Behind them was the pass from which they had just issued. It would have been rash to turn back and attempt the pass again, where perhaps they might meet another detachment of the enemy. For Sako had no doubt that he had been seen and followed since his departure from the Province of Cæsarea, and although two days had elapsed, it seemed more than likely that the enemy had hoped to catch him in the pass. In any case, his position and that of his comrades was a critical one.

The three *aspataks* reined up their horses, reflected, and saw that they three must fight against hundreds, and that at any moment a second detachment might put in an appearance from the other end of the pass. Sako turned his head in that direction. The pass, between two steep, straight mountains, looked a black gulf, gaping and sinister, whence, chafing against his rugged banks, dark Alis flung out of the valley, furious and foaming, roaring against the rocks, like a wounded panther. Once beyond the pass, he followed one of the mountains, curving the whole length of the valley, till his murmur was lost in the distance. On the other side, the mountain line was continuous, steep, high and unbroken. Sako examined the position of the rocks

for some moments, and after some thought, it was there, on this mountain, behind the huge rocks, that he chose a place where he and his comrades could defend themselves.

"Comrades," he said, "we must not remain in the open, for, as you see, the enemy is advancing; and I think they see us. We must make for the rocks, our horses can climb as far as that."

"But there, you see, we shall have no means of escape, in case of necessity, for the mountain is very high and bare, and if we thought of climbing, we should be exposed to the enemy's fire," remarked one of the *aspataks*, a bright-eyed young fellow of thirty.

"Escape?" echoed Sako pensively. "We shall have no need—we have never had any need——" he added significantly.

"We shall do better if we skirt along the confines of the valley, along the foot of the mountains," said the other *aspatak*, after a short silence.

"That is impossible, my friend," replied Sako, "because the valley only describes a large circle, the mountains are like two semi-circles, curving in again in the direction whence the enemy is coming. No, we have only the rocks. Come along, and although we are at close quarters with death, let us always hope for a miraculous victory."

The *aspataks* had only just begun to climb up towards the rocks, when something came tearing through the air, and passed whistling between the feet of Sako's horse, striking against a rock. A puff of smoke went up from the enemy's side, then another, and the whistling shots followed one another, with an interval at first, but afterwards faster and faster,

and then came heavy growls and thunder out of a dense cloud of smoke, and the bullets, in fine confusion, flew through the air like hail.

But the *aspataks* succeeded in reaching the chosen spot safely, and took shelter behind the rocks. There they presently dismounted and began to shoot through the clefts between the boulders.

The Turkish detachment emboldened by superior numbers, now sent a handful of cavalry up to the rocks, and the whole body of soldiers followed them.

"Let them get closer ; cease firing," commanded Sako, and when the vanguard of the enemy's cavalry was near enough, he again gave the order to fire.

"That's the style ; there's two down," exclaimed one of the *aspataks*, laughing, and taking aim again.

The enemy stopped, uncertain, and then gave back fifty paces or so. But then they sent a regular rain of balls against the rocks, making the mountains growl with a long menacing echo. The reply from behind the rocks was deadly, each shot cost a man's life in the ranks of the enemy, who were all exposed. However, the Turks continued to fire away without stopping.

"They certainly mean to make us abandon our post," grumbled Sako, leaning his gun against the rock. "We are invisible to them ; they can't do anything unless they risk an advance in spite of our fire. Don't waste your shot," he added, glancing through a cleft.

But all at once he was surprised to find bullets falling from the opposite direction to that of the enemy, from the direction of the pass, where the Alis was roaring.

"Ah!" said one of the *aspataks*, "we are between two fires. It is the Circassians," he added, "come to help those damned soldiers."

"They show more courage than these wretched police, who are not too rash," laughed the other, aiming at a group of Circassians, who were advancing boldly towards the rocks. "There are plenty of them at any rate," he added, still laughing. "I can count more than a hundred of the savages. They are come out to kill us with great pomp—a blessing on you!" he exclaimed, as his ball whistled and flew, and a Circassian fell stark.

It was a deadly duel that the three *aspataks* were fighting with their enemies, that on either side, keeping up a constant hail of bullets as they advanced, tried again and again to reach the rocks, but were forced to recoil half way up, leaving their dead and wounded behind. The fight had now lasted for almost two hours.

"My cartridge-case is empty," growled one of the *aspataks*.

"There, take this," said Sako, handing over the last from his breast. "If it goes on at this rate, we shall only have enough for another half-hour." And so saying, he felt that the time had come when he and his companions must make a move. He thought, just at first, they might be able to make the enemy withdraw definitely, disgusted at their losses. However, the Circassians had come to their aid and they still held out. The fact was, that the price set upon Sako's head had long since been raised to an enormous sum, and every man, from the *Kaimakam* himself to the lowest Circassian, was determined to

have that head to take to the Government. That head—ah, poor savages, they would have it, perhaps, for he would never be taken alive!

Sako scrutinised the enemy's ranks. The sun had just reached the mountain-top opposite, and under its slanting rays, their weapons shone with a hundred red gleams, lurid and ominous. He glanced up the valley. The setting sun had lit up the whole horizon, and from time to time, it shone beyond the smoke of the enemy's continual volleys, as if bathed in blood. In the upper skies the clouds were piled up in terraces, each edged with a shining line of the colour of golden flame. The valley was fading into grey. For some instants Sako stood, with sad eyes dreaming on the distance, and looked upon Nature. Was it for the last time? Well, he did not greatly care—save for his plans—"and others will carry them out," he muttered.

"Take care, Sako! Get down! You are too much exposed!" cried one of the two *aspataks*, who, busy firing, suddenly realised that his leader was giving the enemy a target between the rocks. At that moment a ball whistled by and flew over his head.

"We have only a score of cartridges left now," remarked one of the *aspataks* to Sako.

"Good," said he simply; "then friends, we have got to look death in the face, and flout her. We can't stay here without cartridges, for them to come and take us alive. You agree?" he added.

The other two would live or die with him, come what might.

"There is only one thing now for us," Sako said slowly; "that is, to mount our horses, and dash across the enemy's fire, taking the direction of the valley—

the mountain is like a wall ; if we have the miraculous luck to pass safe and sound through their fire, we certainly ought to have, after that, the luck to get away somewhere or other." And the irony thrilled through the last words. He had been forced to pronounce the death sentence upon himself and his comrades.

"Let us embrace one another," he added simply, "and then boot and saddle! It's a case of no thoroughfare—but it's a glorious road."

They embraced, brave and brotherly.

"Come along!" Sako cried gaily, and leapt on his white charger.

Mounted on their horses, they issued from the rocks, the last rays of the sun lighting their faces. From both the enemy's parties a long shout of joy and victory arose. Like the wind, the three *aspataks* galloped down the mountain towards the valley. Gunshots resounded like thunder growling in the hills ; the bullets whistled like hail, striking right and left among the stones, and the smoke, as from a crater whose sides have been suddenly rent, rose up and spread in a dense cloud over the whole valley.

The moon had just risen above the horizon and cast a pale, tender radiance upon the valley. Down there, at the foot of the mountain, on the soft grass, a human body lay stretched, breathless, motionless, lifeless. A little apart, the body of a horse was lying. Bleeding and infuriated with his wounds, the good beast, half maddened in the rush by the galling bullets, and unobserved by the enemy in the smoke-clouds, had bolted and disappeared behind a little

wood, bearing on his back the inert body of his master. The blood flowed still, drop by drop, from two deep wounds, one in the foot and one in the side of Sako. Breathless, motionless, and lifeless, he was stretched on his back, his white face turned up to the sky, his eyes closed, his lips blue. He seemed to be dead, and yet his heart was still beating with the last slow feeble throbs. The night wind was rising, and the dew covered his face and bare head. A faint shudder passed over him, the eyes were fixed on the sky. For one brief moment the light of life shone in them. Did memories out of the past come before his eyes? A dull sound hummed in his ears, a continual buzzing, filling his brain with strange music. At times this noise seemed like majestic, harmonious notes flowing from on high, from invisible strings, coming and going on the wind in great waves of melody. At times the sound suddenly shrilled, like sad bitter wailings and mysterious groans, cries of despair and stifled sighs filling the air, creeping low down, gliding along the surface of the earth, and passing away in a furtive and uncertain manner into the recesses of the hills. Sometimes it seemed as if the sound was only the feeble beating of his heart, which groaned and laboured, using the last drops of his blood to send forth his supreme adieu to life, to all those he loved, many of whom were dead, and others so far, far away. Perhaps there was also a good-bye to cherished hopes, with their alluring looks, and to sublime, humanitarian dreams, with their magic power.

And once more the sweet, enchanting sounds of invisible strings seemed to come from on high, in

lingering, melodious waves, thrilling, gently and tenderly through the air, in the pale moonlight, going straight to Sako's heart and lending him wings to waft him towards his inaccessible Ideal, towards the Infinite in the Universe, towards the beauty of Eternity.

Then something clutched painfully at Sako's heart, and that was its last throb. The dew from heaven lay on his beautiful dead face, and in the wide, fixed, cold eyes, as on the big dewdrops on the grass, was reflected the eternal, cold, sad light of the moon.

CHAPTER V

MARO

THE ship was in quarantine at Piræus. But the captain, unwilling to lie there two weeks longer, landed some of the passengers in the quarantine port, and gave orders to sail for Alexandria. There was some confusion at the last moment ; several people wanted to come on the ship, although there was danger in this, as it was rumoured that there was cholera on board. Among the new passengers was a young lady, dressed simply and gracefully in white. She wore on her black hair a sailor hat trimmed with a long white veil, whose two ends were arranged lightly about her neck. She took her place in a little boat, after bidding farewell to a young man, and was rowed to the ship's ladder some distance off.

Presently she and two or three other passengers mounted on deck. The steamer whistled for the second time, and the anchor was weighed. The yellow quarantine flag* was hauled down. Several little boats were scurrying about in the distance. The third whistle sounded ; a thick cloud of smoke issued from the mouths of the two funnels, and the boat

slowly, heavily, and proudly began to move towards the open sea. The young woman leant with one hand on the rail of the deck, and waved her handkerchief with the other. The young man standing on the edge of the jetty waved his hat in return.

It was in the month of August. The burning southern sun flamed with blinding rays, and illuminated everything with dazzling light. The high, white houses, tier upon tier behind the harbour, the large square, the long road—a dusty-white semi-circle between the houses and the harbour—boats, little and big, white and rose-coloured; several large ships, two of them of a brilliant white; the forest of dusty masts, the grey line of rocky, naked hills, and the immense blue space of waters—all were seen in an atmosphere of a startling purity, all shining, shimmering and sparkling under the burning sun, and yet with an effect as of golden dust filling the air, and rising in a transparent and resplendent haze towards a blue cloudless and fiery heaven.

For a few minutes longer the young man could discern the white figure standing on the deck, and the fluttered handkerchief, like a white bird flying; then it disappeared. Proudly, lightly, the boat glided on like a swan, dividing the clear unbroken crystal waters. A moment more and it had disappeared in the flaming horizon, into the golden heart of the sunshine.

The young man stood with his eyes fixed there, on the horizon line, with sad, heavy looks. Yes, the ship had gone. . . . The last noises died away in the quarantine port, and he was left alone; in front of him a little boat was swaying, attached by a chain

to the jetty, and the water splashed softly against the sides of the harbour. Silence lay heavily upon all things. There was no stir in the soft, warm enervating air. Above the vast, empty sea, a gull went wheeling, wheeling, and then flew away to the infinite horizon, and was lost to sight. A swallow, in its arrow-flight, suddenly shrilled sharply in the young man's ear, and it, too, disappeared. Again that heavy silence weighed, desolate and profound. His eyes were bright with tears

It was on the banks of the Nile, where Nature displays her sovereign beauties under brilliant skies, holding eternally in her bosom the waters of that proud, majestic river. In the twilight, always so mournful in the South, the young woman was seated on those banks, gazing far away, her sad thoughts roving. A gentle breeze was blowing, the sun had already sunk, leaving the horizon all aglow. Somewhere, not far off, water was dripping slowly, striking the crystal surface of the river with a silvery tinkle.

The rhythmic sounds attracted the young woman's attention. Was it not her heart-beats? was it not her tears flowing, drop by drop? And why? she asked herself rather sadly. Was it not her own goodwill, the constraint of the Faith, the ardent desire to fight, that had decided her to leave home—leave home? No, rather to sacrifice all her personal ties, all that belonged to her very self—happiness, love, the two children, hardly two and five years old. With what charming *naïveté*, with what unconscious pathos they had let their mother go. "Mamma, don't forget to bring me a doll," the little Elika had

said. "And some pictures, mother!" the boy Vart had added. Poor angels! did they think she would come back the same day? How could they know the grave nature of their mother's action, so big with consequences? What were they doing now? Their frail little bodies had been ravaged by that terrible disease, diphtheria. Both were stretched on sick-beds, and in pain. But she had to leave them, to arise and take the tortuous road which must lead her far away into terrible places, among difficulties seemingly insurmountable, towards the accomplishment of plans, that were audacious, almost mad, and towards dangers almost imminent. What if they were worse now? Suppose they were in danger? And fears, one blacker than another, assailed her, and in a long, painful vision, the white faces of her little ones came vividly before her, and the despair of the man she loved. It was all anguish to her; like a sharp pain in her heart. And she was seized with dull rage against herself. How was it that she was not there with them? Had she really left them, enthusiastic, almost serene, and perhaps for ever? Could it really be that the Faith had robbed her of her love for these dear ones, that they were immaterial beside the Ideal that had given her to the Cause, all for the good of people unknown to her. And these, in their turn, could never know the extent of the private and grave sacrifices that she had made, and was always making; who would never know the suffering she had gone through owing to the bonds that had imprisoned and paralysed her youth, her freedom, her love, her happiness, her own future and that of those she loved? No, those people, the

world, would never know and never appreciate—perhaps they would even repay her with ingratitude, intrigues and deception. But, after all, that did not matter. All this did not prevent her from throwing herself, heart and soul, with strange passion, into the service of this Ideal, with which she was more in love than ever before in her life, which demanded all her thoughts and her whole heart, her entire being;—this intangible, immaterial Ideal, attracting and bewitching her so, that she had given herself up to it altogether and for ever. And they always persist, she mused, this Faith, this Ideal, and always make themselves a living presence. It is a terrible, yet blissful feeling that seizes you, and gives you at once energy and hope, and a belief that happiness for all, and justice for all, will one day be palpable realities. Do not this Faith and this Ideal bring near to your heart the fates and well-being of all men, and teach you to feel the woes of others, and make you reach out with all your soul towards the dawning Future, towards the New Life, and the Promised Land? "The Promised Land," she murmured sadly. "Yes, certainly it will be a reality one day, but as certainly, on that day those who have suffered and toiled and died for it, will be but a handful of dust." And her face, lit by the light in her soul, and her large black eyes, flashing with fire, became clouded.

Once more, with renewed strength, she turned over in her head the dangerous projects she had gone forth to accomplish. And she looked at the moon, which, above the tufted crown of a date palm, showed on the horizon like a round mass of molten gold. Twilight had stretched her veil over the earth. Suddenly, far

away, frogs began to croak, only one or two at first, but afterwards more and more, filling the air with a strange concert of sounds, jangling, monotonous, and harsh. Sometimes the croakings ceased for a moment, only to begin again in unabated strength on the same note, with deafening effect. Innumerable mosquitoes, in confused masses, appeared in the air, hanging in clouds here and there, making a continuous metallic buzzing. And at moments when the croaking was arrested, the silvery fall of the water-sounded, drop by drop, clearer than ever on the crystal river. And when the deep silence fell again, dull, distant noises were heard, like the roar and fall of a mass of water. And this noise mingled with all the twilight sounds made a weird concert, droning on, monotonous and mystic, like a barbarous hymn assailing the secret places of the sky, rising towards the mysterious stars, towards the moon's golden disk, floating sad and solitary in empty space, like a fairy vision.

And still the young woman sat and gazed, and gave ear to every sound, till at last she only seemed to hear the cries, the tears and sobs, heart-breaking, painful, and despairing, that rise from the hearts of an unhappy, weary people who call for help, who clamour for deliverance, and suffer for the sake of freedom, who have sent to the battle-field a whole pleiad of fighters, whose protests and cries and woes have filled the world. "They call! they call!" thought the young woman suddenly, and she shuddered. And her eyes shone proudly, whilst her heart, seized by an ecstasy, beat violently and burned with impatience. She started all at once, rose up and straightened herself,

her cheeks glowing, her looks inspired, and herself carried away on a wave of enthusiasm. Ah, she must go, begone, fly if possible, to St Jean d'Acre, to make her way into the horrible dungeons of this Ottoman Bastille, and carry the good news to the unhappy souls in prison, to deliver them and help them to escape, or at least some among them. And then she must go on to beautiful Cilicia, where the people are more enthusiastic and more courageous, and the seed grows richly and well; and there perhaps victory will crown the great cause for which thousands live and thousands die

The children were still ill when their mother left home—their little frail bodies were racked by their terrible malady. A candle burned feebly in the bedroom. Like two white fading lilies, pale as moonshine, they slept in their tiny beds, and their slumbers were dull and heavy. Their father paced the room like a haunting shadow. Sad and anxious, he had been walking for hours, his thoughts going from the babes to their mother and then to the Cause, in a monotonous painful round that vexed his heart.

"Where is Maro now?" he thought, stopping in the middle of the room, his head bowed on his breast.

In the silence of the night one of the children sighed suddenly. Why had he let her go? he waited, after some minutes, still standing in the same place. Why? But it had seemed so simple. Was it not a duty? Had it not been from a desire to be of use to the people, to take their place, even braving all sorts of dangers? After all, was not that

their life, his and hers, and could he and she do otherwise when conscience urged no other way of fighting? And he began to pace again from one room to the other, deep in crowding, disquieting thoughts, full of torments. That very day he had had news. Maro, at the cost of much *bakshish*—the soul of the Turkish official—had succeeded in “working a miracle,” in making her way in the guise of a rich foreign lady, into the horrible dungeons of the prison of St Jean d’Acre, carrying help to the prisoners, some of whom were in chains, seeing them, speaking with them, even organising the escape of some, and all under the severe suspicious eyes of the jailors and the governor. The prisoners could not believe their eyes. Could it really be Maro herself, whom till then they had only known and admired from afar? It seemed like a miracle, this bold, unheard-of, unparalleled stroke. She could not be a mere mortal that could make her way freely and unhurt into the foul dens, bringing with her a flood of dazzling light. No, it was an angel come down from heaven. “An angel,” each prisoner murmured, secretly terrified lest the danger should suddenly strike this fearless angel, this vision from another world, come to the prison, filled as it was with all the horrors of the sepulchre.

As he read the letter and re-read the last passages, his hands shook. No, she made light of dangers, and after one or two weeks, had left St Jean d’Acre, and gone off to Cilicia. And there, by her enthusiastic character, by her untiring and creative energy, by her knowledge and her brave, good words, she was sowing the good seed, forming the basis of a new

organisation, which was growing, stretching, and gaining ground.

But when he got so far, the letter fell from his hands. Yes—but for long he had had no more news of her. He seemed like a shadow by his children's bedside. And she?—perhaps a shadow too in a dungeon—

"Mamma! mamma!" murmured Erika in her sleep.

The father started.

"Where is mamma?" asked Vart, who had been awake for some moments, watching his father come and go, and had heard his sister's voice. "Where is mamma?" he repeated in his childish insistence, as his father came towards him.

"Far away—far away," said the father sadly, and his voice broke.

"Will she come back soon?"

"Perhaps," stammered the father in uncertain accents, and his knees gave way, and he sat down on a chair, weary and speechless.

At the beginning of the autumn of 1895, when the glorious insurrection of Zeitun broke out in that district and in some others of Cilicia, the Armenian regiments of insurrectionists distinguished themselves by courageous acts, and a series of brilliant successes during several months was crowned by their decisive victory. Those regiments bore the name of *Maro*.

CHAPTER VI

THE EIGHTH OF SEPTEMBER

ON the eve of the 8th of September 1893, since become historical, Léon, with the police on his track, had taken refuge in an Armenian garret. The night was far gone. He was seated by a desk, in a melancholy attitude, his eyes fixed on a small lamp, which lit up the room in a feeble way. He had heard that day the news of Sako's death. Two months before, the tragic deaths of Tzaroukian and his friends had taken place—deaths which had created a great sensation and cried aloud for vengeance. Every dungeon in the Ottoman empire was filled with Armenian prisoners; the numbers of the expatriated were to be counted in thousands; local persecutions and slaughter, perpetrated by the armed Ottoman forces upon the Armenians, were repeated systematically. The hunt organised by the police became general, and was directed against all Armenians. Numerous searches took place daily, and always ended in barbarous cruelty. Houses were sacked, plundered and spoiled, men were arrested and tortured, women were insulted; and, under pretext of ransoms for the prisoners, large sums of money were

always being extorted. Under such conditions, the struggle against tyranny became more and more difficult, greatly telling upon the forces of the revolutionaries, which were destined for future struggles. Léon rose up abruptly and began to pace the room. Then he paused in a deep study, and an idea made his gentle eyes shine. No, that did not prevent the movement from growing, for had it not become a national movement? Thousands of people had come to reinforce the ranks of the revolutionaries. Peasants from the meanest hut, as well as persons from every class of society, including the educated class, had responded *en masse* to the appeal of the revolutionaries. It was a movement to inflame every feeling heart and every thinking spirit. The nation was divided into those who were for, or against, the movement: none were indifferent. They went down to death—to win life for others. Certainly, however, the Government had succeeded in turning a quantity of Armenians into spies, and if the patriots were hunted down, it was generally owing to these vile creatures, these secret enemies. But if the movement once became general, these spies would disappear of themselves, by the force of circumstances.

Léon sat down again, and taking some sheets of paper, began to write with a nervous, rapid hand. He was writing letters, possessed by the one idea of advising the members of the party everywhere not to hasten events, but to organise as strongly as possible. It is true that there were objections to these tactics. The utility of a sound organisation was certainly rarely disputed, but events were apt to be hastened by the acts of the Government itself. This was not

the result of any definite decree of the authorities, but simply the outcome of accumulated circumstances, produced by the intolerance and excesses of the Government. Nevertheless, careful for the future of the movement, Léon continued to write vigorously, setting forth reasons against the precipitation of events, advising certain tactics, though all the time at the bottom of his soul he instinctively foresaw the disasters that were being prepared by the Ottomans for the Armenian people, out-wearied and without help. For the first time he had the painful, horrible presentiment of a general failure for the movement, and this sensation suddenly blanched his cheeks, but he overcame it directly. No, the mere hastening of events could not bring defeat on a national movement, if it were solidly organised. And once more he wrote with a nervous hand, possessed wholly by the thought of the Cause and its triumph

The lamp was still burning, as it always did through his laborious nights, when, towards the dawn, he suddenly heard the sound of horses' hoofs. At such an hour, in the Armenian quarter, this nocturnal cavalcade seemed strange to him, but his window looked on the court, and so he could not satisfy his curiosity. Perhaps it was a special patrol, that came often enough now. For one instant he felt a strong inclination to go out into the street, but when silence fell again, he returned to his writing.

The same morning, as the first faint light shivered timidly over the pale autumn skies, the inhabitants of

the town of Marzovan were awakened in alarm by the threatening roar of guns.

Long before the dawn, an unaccustomed agitation reigned in the Armenian quarter, by the side of the market. Whilst every one slept soundly in the houses, outside, in the streets, regular detachments of Ottoman soldiers had been mustering, with wary, noiseless steps, in secret, like thieves. They took their station, stopping the mouths of the streets, and so forming various groups. Thus nearly three hundred soldiers had already taken their places in the thoroughfares. From time to time, their officers approached them and gave orders in hushed voices. More than once already, groups of cavalry had entered the quarter separately and silently, and reining their horses well in, had taken up their various places. There were upwards of a hundred. These were followed by an interminable file of hundreds of Circassians and Gurjis, arriving in some confusion at a gay and easy pace, but quietly, though with a savage, ferocious air; for they were impatient for the spoil which had been promised them as a reward. All were armed with guns and bayonets, which had been specially distributed that same night. All this took place in a quiet and orderly manner in the chief Armenian quarter. At the same time, in the other Armenian quarters, a crowd of Turks had collected from the neighbouring villages, specially sent by the authorities and under the orders of *tchavooshes*. Their task was to prevent the Armenians from leaving their houses. The other part of the town and all its surroundings were enclosed by a chain of Turks, inflamed to anger and fanaticism, and with special orders to slay all the more

foolish or timid among those Armenians, who should attempt to escape from the city. All this black mass crowding about the quarters and around the town had the sinister aspect of a terrible, menacing conspiracy.

The ever-indifferent heavens lighted up in Marzovan that morning a scene of hideous ferocity on the one side, and on the other, of pure heroism. • The roar of the guns, at the hour of Nature's still, solemn *levée*, shook the whole quarter and roused a sounding echo in the town. The fire was directed against a great tenement which stood by the side of the building of the Congregation of Protestants. This house contained a large number of lodgings, occupied by Armenian families. The police had traced a group of *aspataks* there. So the storm broke over the town with the dawning of day. The soldiers battered in the great doors of the tenement, leading to the court, and from there they began to shoot through the windows into the house. The *aspataks*, taken by surprise, rose, all dressed, as they had slept; and, sheltering behind the windows, discharged their guns in reply. The roar became more and more unbroken, the dense smoke darkened the early morning light and spread everywhere in grey clouds. The soldiers began to drop, killed or wounded by the balls which rained upon them from behind the windows. And so a half hour passed away. Terror prevailed in all the lodgings of the tenement, yet not a single cry was raised; all hearts were invaded by it, but no one dared to utter a single word; all guarded themselves as if by instinct against the betrayal of their despair. And amid the ominous silence, the balls fell like a hail-storm, battering the walls and windows, breaking the

glass, penetrating to the rooms, and burying themselves in the furniture, the flooring, and the roof. Silently, but with a steady impassioned air, the *aspataks* made a desperate struggle for life, whilst the number of their assailants increased every moment, and their attack waxed more and more furious. They were impatient to begin slaying the little group of men who were unseen, but whose balls never ceased to whistle and scurry through the air. But in the end the rage of the assailants increased. An hour's fight had thinned their ranks, which were all exposed. Already the soldiers began to murmur. They had no desire to fight with invisible "devils," who sported with life and death. They spoke of retreat, "if there was no better way found of shooting the devils."

"All this crowd of Turkish savages is occupied with us six," exclaimed a young *aspatak* with bright eyes, as he reloaded his gun. "Our position is becoming critical; we must make for the eastern quarter."

"Yes, yes, Mekhitar," assented another young man; his black eyes had a gentle expression, and his finely-cut face was pale. "But before we do that, we must tell these savages that we are going there, so that they may let the people in this house alone."

"Yes, yes, Mihran is right, we must call out to the soldiers that we are leaving this place," cried other voices.

Choosing a moment's lull in the shooting, Mekhitar advanced to the window, and standing aside, he shouted clearly to the soldiers that they were going eastwards and would await them there. And as he rallied them a little, the balls began to fly again,

and struck against the window frame. But there was no return from the interior. This last circumstance seemed to encourage the assailants. Many of them fell upon the doors leading from the small courtyard of the vast house. The doors gave way under their vigorous pushes, and the assailants, shrieking, shouting, and gesticulating, shoved and hauled themselves into the little courtyard. Here they came upon a youth, a dweller in the house, who at the sight of the raging mob, stood rooted to the spot, seized with sudden terror. He was felled with bayonets and the butt-ends of muskets. At the same moment a piercing shriek was heard inside the house, and a young girl rushed out into the court, through one of the doors.

"No, no, do not kill him, he is my brother. Oh, Kérobé! He is innocent! What are you doing? Oh, my God!"

But her lamentations wasted the soldiers' time, and they dragged her from her brother's lifeless body, and breaking his arm, threw her down as they would a sack. The body collapsed on the ground, and the young girl tumbled down in a faint. Afterwards they fell again upon Kérobé, and having attached a rope to his bleeding body, they dragged it to the road, where a finishing blow broke the boy's skull.

Meanwhile many others, both soldiers and *bashi-basouks*, had broken into the houses in hundreds, and there, like furies unchained, they began to sack, to break and destroy all the doors, windows and furniture, to tear into tatters the cushions and hangings of the beds, and to steal and carry off anything that appeared to them of some value. What with the

oaths, the cries, the weeping, the noise, the coming and going, all was mingled tumult and indescribable confusion, and the whole house shook under it. A little later, all the men who had lived in that house formed a long line, all arrested and all streaming with blood from their wounds, as they were conducted between two files of soldiers towards the town jail.

And during this time the fusilade had begun again in the east quarter, where the six *aspataks* were now to be found.

"Sound the bugle call!" cried the commander of the Turkish forces, who was seated on horseback, and was wildly excited.

The bugle sounded, and from all directions hundreds of soldiers, Circassians and Gurjis, rushed up, and a desperate fusilade continued for three hours without interruption. The whole city shook with the sinister noises, and hid itself in thick clouds of smoke. At a word from the commander, a detachment of mounted police and *tcharvooshes* dispersed themselves in the Turkish quarters, to provoke the fanaticism of the Mohammedan populace, remaining up till now calm and indifferent. Then there was a formidable *mélée*. Menacing crowds collected in the hilly places in the town. From the high minarets, the *muessins*, instead of reciting the usual prayers, cried with piercing voices upon the believers in Mohammed to massacre the infidels. The crowd swept along the streets in howling waves, hurrying towards the quarters of the Armenians, who, in their terror, had shut themselves into their houses, which looked like huge, silent, desolate tombs. Above the town the air vibrated

unceasingly with a dull, intense noise, and, amid the roar of the guns, from time to time something suddenly cracked like thunder. It was the bombs thrown by the *aspataks*.

Just as the fusilade began in the East, a young man rushed out of one of the neighbouring houses and joined the *aspataks*. It was Léon. Bare-headed, and with radiant face and shining eyes, he looked splendid and terrible.

"A gun for me, if you have one to spare!" he almost shouted to the *aspataks*.

"Ah, Léon, why do you come here? Are not our deaths enough; why must you die too?" stammered Mihran tenderly, whilst a smile of joy and gratitude shone on his fine face. At the same moment a ball struck him on the shoulder.

"Look to the enemy and keep up your hearts, my friends!" cried Léon, taking the gun that was offered to him.

The *aspataks* were placed in front of the walls of a house that sheltered them somewhat, and behind some piles of bricks that served them as a barricade. The presence of Léon, whom they admired, his courage, his inspiring words, increased the temerity of the *aspataks*. Balls rained from both sides; the fire was fierce and desperate.

But the six *aspataks* with Léon showed untiring courage, a sureness of aim and an heroic obstinacy which drew admiring exclamations even from the lips of the enemy. There was a moment when a series of shots from the *aspataks* brought down a half dozen of their assailants; and the commander knitted his thick eyebrows. He saw that two of the *aspataks* were

already grievously wounded, and was astonished at their persisting to fire in such a state.

"Ah, after all," he grumbled to his *aide*, "they are possessed by devils, and they won't cease firing till they have caused us serious losses. Call on them to surrender."

Immediately a piercing voice was heard above the heads of the crowd—

"Surrender, and give up your arms!"

A terrible fusilade was the reply, whilst at the same time a voice cried out—

"With our corpses!"

And the fusilade was renewed with such violence, that it seemed as if all the neighbouring houses would be destroyed. These were terrible hours for the small group of *aspataks*, in their unequal fight, but hours that were never to be forgotten, hours of heroism. Their hearts were filled with the passion for fighting, with the added enthusiasm of their guiding idea. The passion of revenge for centuries of slavery, the love of the mother country, of the people, of this noble and valiant *rôle* that they had assumed, everything served to intoxicate the *aspataks* with a burning ecstasy. In their sight at that moment, heaven and earth were mingled in a grey mass, through which they had glimpses of a formidable wall—the enemy's forces—from whose iron talons they would at all costs deliver a tortured people and a wasted country.

Léon looked at them an instant. He was struck by their radiant faces under the hail of balls, under the shadow of death. Their souls were unsealed to his, he seized their thought; in a glimpse too, he saw

death, which was so soon to snatch them from the battle-field, whose flowers they were. And he could not resist glancing at the other side, from whence this shrieking, whistling death should come, so cruel and so fitting, and so inevitable. A black compact mass moved before his eyes, stretching forth like the waves of the sea, towards the heights, where it blotted out the horizon. The *muezzins* on the high minarets still cried aloud, in a wild chant, praying to Mohammed and God to help them. A continuous dull clamour filled the air with a lugubrious echo.

As he turned to load his gun, he suddenly heard a faint groan. He turned abruptly, and saw Mihran falling. He ran to him, and leaning down supported the head of the wounded man in his hand.

"Mihran, my brave fellow!" he cried tenderly. "Where are you wounded?" he added.

"I have several wounds," Mihran whispered at length, "there—there——" he murmured, pointing to his heart.

The *aspataks* looked silently and sombrely at one another.

"Go, my brave fellow," said Léon mournfully, "we are coming after you."

"Ah, no, save yourself, Léon—if it's not too late. You——" Mihran could not finish his sentence; his head fell heavily, and his beautiful eyes, wide open, suddenly grew dim, and the eyelids gently closed over them.

At the same time as he still bent over the dying man, Léon felt something hot plunge into his foot. Instinctively he put his hand on it.

"You are wounded, O cursed day!" exclaimed

Mekhitar, in a voice that quivered with emotion ; he had observed Léon's action.

"Why, cheer up, Mekhitar, you have several wounds yourself, and are still standing, and still firing." And so saying, Léon resumed his gun.

The fight had lasted three hours. In one of the houses near, behind the window, through a hole in the closed shutter, two people could not tear themselves away from the bloody spectacle. They were trembling all over, and their teeth chattered violently. One was an aged woman, the other a young girl.

"O my God ! look at them !" exclaimed the latter, quite terrified, after a long silence. "Look at them !" she repeated after a pause, staring out with big eyes of astonishment and terror mingled. "They are like lions '" she murmured in a shaking voice.

"Or saints," murmured the old woman, wiping away her tears.

The shots sounded again, and a thick cloud of smoke obscured the little group of *aspataks*.

"See," cried Mekhitar to Léon, "there's another wound on your forehead. Ah, I beg of you," he added, "to go—go, and hide yourself somewhere, in one of these houses near. You will be needed more than ever in the future."

The other *aspataks* pressed him too ; they all begged him to fly—Léon did not give in. Bullets continued to rain upon them.

"There are no more balls in the bag !" suddenly declared one of the *aspataks*, with an air of consternation.

A shuddering horror shook them all.

"They shan't touch me alive ! Long life to our

country!" cried Mekhitar, and in the twinkling of an eye he made for the heaps of bricks, and cocked his revolver at his temple. A cry of horror was torn from the breasts of Léon and the *aspataks*.

"Long life to the *padishah*!" the shout was suddenly raised by hundreds of voices, and with a long triumphant cheer, the mass of armed men rushed upon the group of *aspataks*. Above the heights the sinister roar of cannon was heard, and the whole city trembled, as if rendering her last breath, in ghastly tumult.

At the police station the body of Léon was stretched on the bare floor. His head was bound with a bloody handkerchief. His clothes were in tatters, and in many places the naked flesh showed through. His right hand was also bandaged, also his two feet, his leg and his knee. His eyes, though much inflamed, still kept their gentle, profound expression, although at times, in the white, lifeless face, with stains of blood on it, they looked glazed and unnatural. He had been submitted to an interrogation for three whole hours, and as he remained mute the whole time, or only replied in insignificant phrases, they had put him to torture, and torn the bandages from his wounds to make the blood flow. More than five hours had passed since the end of the battle. How he had been brought to the police station he knew not. He only remembered the sensation of maltreatment, and that he had suffered from it more than from his wounds. When he revived to find himself lying on the ground where he was now, he begged for a cup of water, and they

refused it; he demanded a covering for his half-naked body, and they refused him; he begged them to put an end to his existence as quickly as possible, and they did all in their power to prolong his agony. And Léon's body lay stretched on the bare ground, an inanimate, bleeding, perishing body. Was this the militant and inspired orator? Was this the unwearying toiler, the worker for liberty, the pure, devoted heart, the sweet, strong soul? Stretched on the earth, he suffered, mutely, stoically, with a lucid spirit that never ceased to think. From the two wounds on his feet, ill-bandaged, the blood flowed continuously, and dripped, forming a pool all round him. From time to time he closed his eyes, and stayed so for long, his face dead white, like white paper. His blood still flowed, and he grew weaker and failed, like a spent candle. And lying so, he seemed already dead. But when he raised his eyes again, for an instant his eyes shone with a phosphoric brilliance, as if he perceived a distant, desired vision long prayed for.

Was it sweet, unforgotten memories of the past, or the consciousness of a task accomplished and of reconciliation with death, or perhaps a vision of the future, a splendid dream of the good days to come, days of eternal happiness and justice, floating, unrolling, over his beloved people, over humanity itself? Who knows? The blue lips were dumb, the eyes were closed again, and perhaps in a few moments the spirit would be darkened for ever, and the warm heart quiver with its last throbs. The blood still flowed, and all alone, he grew weaker and failed like a dying candle.

All of a sudden the door was opened, and several *saptiés* brought in three Armenians, under arrest, who had already been submitted to examination. The *saptiés* went away at once and locked the door after them. At the noise Léon opened his eyes. As soon as they were left alone with him, the three Armenians approached Léon and bent over him anxiously. One of the prisoners was a personal acquaintance of his. Léon recognised him, and with a sick smile and in a faint voice he murmured—
“Will you put me there?”

The three men understood him, and as they lifted him up and placed him upon the table, they saw that he was bleeding. As soon as they had readjusted the bandage, the bleeding stopped. They did what little they could for him, and after some minutes Léon made another effort to speak, still in the same dying voice.

“Were they killed, all the *aspataks*?”

“All, it is thought.”

“Ah, my war-hawks!” sighed Léon. “Were there many arrests?” he whispered, after a long pause.

“Very many.”

“And among our comrades?”

“Many of them.”

Silence fell again, a heavy, painful silence. Léon's eyelids closed again, and the whiteness of death spread over his serene face. The three prisoners gazed anxiously at him.

“Léon—Léon——” they stammered more than once, and the tears stood in their eyes.

“Why do you weep?” murmured Léon, raising his heavy eyelids after some instants. “Work, work,”

he added in a scarcely audible voice, and he gazed with his deep fixed look at the three prisoners.

Just then the key was turned in the lock, and the door opened. The three prisoners immediately resumed their places.

"What is this?" cried the coarse voice of a *saptié*, as he entered. He approached Léon angrily, and seizing him under the arms, dragged him roughly off the table, and threw him on the ground. One of the bandages came off, and blood flowed freely.

But the *saptié* had turned towards the door, and was saying politely—

"Come in, sir, come this way, doctor."

The doctor appeared. He was sent by the Armenian community in the town, for they had learned that Léon had been utterly neglected, and had made repeated efforts to get the permission to send a doctor to the wounded man. But it was only after five hours' indecision that the *Kaimakam* had given his consent.

The doctor, an Armenian, approached Léon with a serious air, glancing at the three prisoners as he did so. He felt his pulse, then, laying down the wounded man's hand, he paused a moment, still with his serious air.

"Place him upon the table," he ordered.

The *saptié* grimaced, but as the three prisoners hurried forward, he joined them.

The doctor began to examine the wounds.

"The wounds are slight," he said after a little time, and he looked severe and sombre. "He might have been saved, but he is already exhausted by hæmorrhage."

Léon was dead.

In the Armenian cemetery of Marzovan there, stands a simple mournful grave in a retired and lonely place. It is the grave of Léon. In spring-time and in summer, the birds flutter and chirp about it merrily, filling the air with their clear songs. Wild flowers and grass grow round the flat gravestones there, and eternal sleep is cradled by soft winds. Several times in a year, on the 8th of September, and on *fête* days, women and young girls come sadly to the grave and kneel by it, laying on it with pious, careful, tender hands, bunches and wreaths of flowers. They speak with sighs of the still sleeper who never wakes, and shudderingly they recall the day, when, amid general and profound mourning, the sobbing women, from their high windows, strewed the biers of Léon and the *aspataks* with flowers. And stirred by their recollections, they often weep and pray there for long hours. Then with quivering lips they kiss the gravestone, and sad and silent they go slowly away. Sometimes, too, the young men come there and linger a long time, with their eyes fixed on the cold stone. And it seems to them, as they gaze, lost in thought, that gradually a monument is being built up before them, and grows and grows till it is great and high. The revered, beloved form throughout all ages, and in the future, shall stand thus great and proud, and his brow, crowned as a martyr's with the Idea of universal happiness.

CHAPTER VII

SASSOON

ON a dark night in the month of April, 1894, a wood fire was flaring at the foot of a deep, narrow, mysterious valley, near the mountain Sim of Moosh. The trembling firelight shone out, and lit up the trees with fantastic figures. The branches of an ancient, lofty oak-tree spread over the fire, and the dancing tongues of flame kept the leaves in a constant quiver. From time to time the fire burnt low, and the last lights shot up furtively, and then suddenly blackness fell upon everything. But as soon as more wood was piled on, the fire began to crackle again, and sparks flew, and then a blaze burst out, lighting up everything near it, and leaving the rest in a darkness that was full of terror. High overhead between the opposing mountain-crests, the black, unfathomable sky appeared, and in the deep distance rare stars shone like diamonds. The fir-trees and pines rose up black and spectral along the slopes of the mountains. The night was calm. There was a faint breath of wind.

A group of men were sitting, cross-legged, round the fire, on little carpets spread upon the ground. Their

brown-tanned faces bore the stamp of ferocity and bravery. There was a severe, bold and aggressive light in their eyes. They were square, solid figures. The pistols, revolvers, and daggers sticking in their broad coloured sashes, shone with a sinister effect. The wide, high turbans that covered their heads added to their already savage and threatening aspect. The sombre, yellow, deeply-wrinkled faces of the old men, with their long white beards and moustaches, made them look ghostly in the dim light. They all formed a circle round the fire, illumined by its red glare, and mysteriously touched by its flickering shadows. The whole thing, the group of men, this night scene round the fire in the inaccessible and mysterious valley, with its whispered sounds, was like an evil dream. A little apart, beneath the trees, in the darkness, were the horses, and in the silence, they could be heard munching hay. Their keepers were seated by them, a group of men who talked in low voices, and stolidly smoked cigarettes.

Silence reigned round the fire. Every now and then the barking of dogs could be heard, a sign of some dwelling in the neighbourhood, probably that of one of the nomad tribes of the Kurds, who live in tents. Ah! those tents that are like wild things, always free, always ready to flit and possess fresh places, sometimes clinging to the mountain-sides, sometimes spread out in grey blots on the enamel of smiling prairies, sometimes buried out of sight in the deep valleys and woods, or on river banks, or near leaping springs. And the little people that dwell in them, the Kurdish children, with their unfettered, careless, open-air life, they are as merry, as fleet, and

as wild as deer! After the long hot playtime of the day, at twilight and at nightfall, they scatter themselves about the skirts of the tents; and, wandering about in little parties, they speak in fearful whispers and tell dreadful stories of ghosts and *jinn*s, especially of that *jinn*—he had even been seen—who carried off the best Arab charger from the tents, the beautiful gold-coloured steed. The *jinn* appeared suddenly from heaven knows where, leaped on a horse and made him fly like the wind towards the thick forest, his long locks mingling with the horse's flowing mane, which shone like silk of gold above his starry eyes. They speak too, about the wicked water-sprites, one of whom, they say, came out of the river last year and carried off a little child. And the childish imaginations, excited and troubled, fly off on the wings of fear, from one terror to a worse, raising ghosts in every gorge and cavern, in the cataracts and in the thunder. How their hearts throb and thump at such hours! The tales are so fascinating and yet so horrible. And what little free creatures they are themselves, like fugitive, strayed visions from limpid fountains!

The whole look of the tents changes at dawn. Under dull or smiling skies, life begins again, the men, each in obedience to the common master of the tribe, go to work, taking the cattle afield, or the carpets and other wares made by the women, to neighbouring hamlets to sell; or resuming their trade as mule-drivers, as well as that of brigandage and plunder; or simply busying themselves in hunting or various games.

Then the women and children are left alone among

the tents to do their daily tasks. They weave carpets, or spin coarse cloth and make garments; everywhere among the tents wood fires are seen on which little pots are placed to cook the simple food. On the grass in front of the tents, a group of horses are feeding, the great thick-headed dogs keep a stolid, stealthy watch; the children, half-naked, bare-headed and unkempt, leap and shout at their play like kids; and the women are gossiping, wrangling, or singing at their work, flitting here and there, or seated in groups. . . . And so they lead their open-air life, in the wind and the rain, in the snow and ice, beneath the unchanging blue of the summer skies, bathed in the dazzling, burning sunshine, amidst the voices of Nature, the singing of birds and of waters; where Nature is richly decked with a thousand colours, and adorned in wild and lavish profusion.

The men grouped about the fire were silent, with grave, sombre faces. They were amongst the most famous of the *bey*s, both for courage and cruelty, chiefs of Kurdish tribes, such as Kharzan, Bélek, Bagran, Zilan, Khian, Rashgotan, Sheikhtotan, Djélal, Batigan, and others. That most famous chief of the Kurdish tribes of Dersim was also there, the celebrated Tahir *bey*. His father, Shah Hussein *bey*, with his wisdom, his courage and his frank and powerful character, had cast a sort of royal splendour over all the Kurdish tribes of Kurdistan, Taron, Vaspoorakan, and Dersim. His influence went so far that he could threaten to make all the Kurds rise against the Ottoman government, whose sworn enemy he was.

For many years before his death, he cultivated intimate relations with the Armenians, and his dream

was of a concerted rising of Kurds and Armenians against the Turkish government. His energy was extraordinary. He was terribly hunted and persecuted by the government, who made a resolve to put an end to this redoubtable enemy. They caused him to suffer enormous material losses, and then succeeded in putting him in prison for several years. When he was released, he was in advanced old age, and died in 1891, amidst the mountain wilds of his beloved Dersim, surrounded by the chiefs of the Kurdish tribes. To his son, Tahir *bey*, he bequeathed his own example. Although he did not possess so wide an influence as his father, yet Tahir *bey* had the essential qualities of a Kurdish chief, and was loved and respected by all the tribes. At this moment he sat silent and thoughtful, with his eyes fixed on the fire, and his brows knitted ; he was about forty years of age, and his manly figure, rich dress, and costly armour were those of a brilliant warrior.

Seated carelessly by his side was his nephew, Ismail *bey*, a handsome, slender youth, with bright eyes. He was famous in the active and dangerous games of *jerid*, as well as in the hunt. His horse flew like lightning, surpassing all the others in speed, whilst Ismail *bey* curled and wound himself round the body of the splendid beast, shooting with his pistol, with an egg for a target, or lifting tiny objects from the ground, or throwing his glittering dagger in the air and catching it in his sleeve ; in all these and many other feats he was unexcelled. But what caused most astonishment among all the spectators, was that throughout these exercises he always retained the natural grace peculiar to his slender body

and well-made figure, while no movement was discordant. He could make his Arab steed perform tricks in leaping that drew forth shouts of admiration. On such occasions, how many hearts among the Kurdish women beat tenderly and proudly for him, and the flame of love was kindled when they saw the dancing eyes, and the manly and attractive beauty of the young Kurd. And they loved him passionately, and many among them consented to let him carry them off, to fly with him upon his charger, towards the mysterious forests, towards the inaccessible mountains, towards the silent caverns—places that became the charmed paradise of their happy, ardent love. Thus Ismail *bey* had carried off beautiful women of the different Kurdish tribes, and the latter, horribly exasperated, became the sworn enemies of Ismail and of his tribe. If Shah Hussein's glory—still a living tradition—and the influence of Tahir *bey* had not covered the young Kurd's doings, these tribes would long since have fallen upon one another with the sword.

Having passed his early youth in this manner, Ismail *bey*, now at the age of twenty-eight years, had been seized, strangely enough, with a passion for an Armenian of rare beauty, the beloved and adored daughter of a chief of one of the villages. The love of the *bey* was impetuous, savage, indomitable. Sometimes he was on fire with his passion, sometimes his baffled rage made him weep, and then he was like a beautiful, wild, wounded creature. At times, too, filled with the pride of his courage and the power of his good looks, he formed in his head dangerous plans for carrying the maiden off, and grew

irritated, imperious and impatient, ready to take an eagle's flight towards the heights of his inflamed ambition. And the intoxicating dream of abduction made him half crazy at times, till suddenly he staggered, brought to earth by its utter impossibility. The tradition of Shah Hussein was still great and powerful; Tahir *bey*, like his dead father, still liked and protected the Armenians, Ismail *bey* himself had sworn on the sacred tomb of the old man to be faithful to this tradition, even unto death. To violate his oath would be the most shameful of odious deaths. And weeping with rage and the passion of love, Ismail *bey* kept himself solitary, and would wander for days, like a shadow, on the hills of beautiful, wild Dersim.

All were silent, till Ismail *bey*, buried in thought, suddenly gave vent to a deep sigh. Just then, Hassan *agha*, the son of one of the chiefs of the tribes of Khian, a brave and taciturn young fellow, with a severe expression in his eyes, who was never conquered in the *jesid* games except by Ismail *bey*, glanced at the latter with a look of hatred. Vengeance was in his heart; he could not forgive Ismail *bey* for a particularly brilliant victory some two years ago. He had cherished his rancour ever since, seeking an occasion for revenge, and at present, tortured by secret rage, he sought a pretext for a quarrel, even if it should cost him his life. He was about to launch into some biting sarcasm, when all at once a voice spoke. It was that of the celebrated, the popular and revered Sheikh of his tribe, the Sheikh of Khian, who held the place of honour in the present assembly, and whose words broke the general

reserve. Seated on either side of him in ranks, were several other well-known Sheikhs, wearing the green turban, and belonging to different tribes.

"I have spoken already. All you who are lords and chiefs of our tribes, give ear to my words. I have called you for an important discussion. May Allah himself and his great prophet enlighten us by their wisdom."

The Sheikh of Khian spoke in solemn tones, in a voice enfeebled by extreme age. He paused and knitted his long, thick eyebrows, beneath which the little quick eyes sparkled. He inhaled with a deep breath the smoke of his cigarette, which he held in a long cigar-holder. The fire cast a red glow the colour of blood upon his yellow, bony, wrinkled face. That face, with its long, white beard and moustache, had as a livid and harsh expression, as of an evil spirit of the tomb.

He resumed: "Special delegates have been sent on behalf of the governor of Bitlis, Tahsin Pasha, also on behalf of the commander of the fourth *corps d'armée* of Erzinguan, Zekki Pasha—the commander of our great armies of Hamidié."

And the Sheikh explained at length that these delegates were sent by the special command of the *Kalif-padishah*, who through them addressed the Kurdish tribes, "beloved, faithful, and courageous," and called upon them to "save the great faith of the great prophet," now defiled and threatened by the infidels.

It was proposed that these high designs should be first put into execution at Sassoon, whose inhabitants, Armenian mountaineers, had by their infidelity called

down upon themselves the just and severe chastisement of the *padishah*. And the Sheikh himself addressed his audience and excited and inflamed them, in the name of the Mohammedan faith, to destroy those unworthy mountaineers, and become the masters of their soil, by establishing there the power of the Kurdish tribes. He declared that this mountain folk was the enemy of the Kurds, that they dared to resist the Kurds, when these, as was right and proper, wished to profit by the use of the pasturages, the cattle, and the produce of the villages of Sassoon.

"They have dared, these infidels, to maltreat us," cried the Sheikh, moved by a savage exaltation, "they have dared to refuse us their flocks and herds. They say that their goods belong to them alone, while they are in reality mere *raïas*, with no right to their possessions. They are only our slaves, our serfs! And they have even dared more than once to resist us in arms."

Fiery exclamations and oaths burst from many lips. The words of the Sheikh excited every one.

"They have killed three men of my tribe. I must be revenged!" cried a *bey* of the tribe of Batigan, and red with rage he made threatening gestures.

"They carried off ten horses from my stables, declaring that my men had stolen them from theirs. Very good, I shall show them what it means to carry off horses that have once eaten of the corn in my mangers;" and the speaker, a Sheikh of the tribe of Zilan, rolled his angry eyes and struck his knees with his hands.

Loud exclamations and sounds of approval and of

anger were repeated after each declaration, and this manner of speech continued for some time.

The Sheikh of Khian, after surveying the speakers with satisfaction, continued :

"Zekki Pasha declares that his army shall be the first to give battle, and he is sure that with our aid he will achieve a victory."

"*Ish-allah, Ish-allah*, by God's grace." The shouts rose on all sides like one voice, and betrayed the general satisfaction.

"Zekki Pasha declares," continued the Sheikh, raising his voice, "that the great armies of Hamidié should also take part in the battle," and with a keen look of his roving eye, he added : "There are great promises on the part of the *Kalif-padishah*, of gifts, privileges, medals, money——"

A savage and sordid expression lit up all eyes.

"And what more? What is to be our reward?" was the impatient clamour.

"Rich booty!" cried the Sheikh, and as if catching their enthusiasm, he added in a still higher key : "Quantities of rich booty, and of women—maidens——" He stopped. Amid the silence and hushed attention he said, after a short pause, in significant tones——

"And rivers of the accursed blood of these infidels, these descendants of the *jinnns*! And through that we shall tread the path of the *jennèth* of the great Prophet!"

At that moment his aged face wore an expression of divine elevation, a savage expression shone in his eyes, and his right arm was raised with one finger pointing on high. So he stood, like a statue, amidst

the cries and clamour of the Kurds, half mad with excitement. In each breast there was roused at once religious fanaticism, insatiable cupidity and bestial passion. This savage excitement lasted for some time. At length the Sheikh began to speak again. He entered into details upon the subject of warlike preparations, of the posts to be occupied, of the gifts and privileges to be exacted from the government in recompense for the services rendered to it, and he calculated the probable quantity of the spoils. He also named the notables and chiefs of the Armenian villages of Sassoon who must be slain, in order to make the work of vengeance complete. By degrees the discussion became general, and a burning one, they began to speak of the distribution of the booty obtained from the provinces of Sassoon, and of the gifts and gold that would be received. Then some rose from their places and approached others with shouts and gesticulations and insults; then the *mêlée* became general, and the noise increased, rose and echoed through the narrow valley. The moment for bloodshed was approaching fast, when the Sheikh of Khian interposed, and this example was followed by other Sheikhs and *bey*s who had kept cool, and after some difficulty they succeeded in quieting the disputants.

During the disputes Hassan *agha* was very violent, and tried incessantly to pick a quarrel with Ismail *bey*, who, however, had remained silent and pensive all the time. He seemed to be in a dream, with his thoughts far away, taking no heed of the tumult around him. Tahir *bey* had also kept silence all the time, and not unobserved by the keen eye of the Sheikh of

Khian, who now addressed him in malicious tones, though quite respectfully, and said—

“You say nothing, *bey*.”

Tahir *bey* made no reply, his head was bowed on his broad breast, and he had a thoughtful and melancholy air.

“You have not spoken, Tahir *bey*,” repeated the Sheikh of Khian, and this time his voice trembled slightly to severity. But he added quickly and in calmer tones: “Your name and your tribe are great; your father’s glory is on your brow; you are invited here as one of the greatest among the great Kurdish chiefs; it is necessary for us all to have your concurrence, and to know that rather than lose your authority, you will join us in this holy war, taken up in the name of the Faith. Speak!”

“I swear by the name of Allah and that of his great Prophet that my thought is pure,” declared Tahir *bey* in a grave and solemn voice, amidst general attention. “You all know what was the last wish of my father, revered by you all.”

He stopped—the face of the Sheikh grew dark. The silence weighed heavily on all.

“I know,” resumed Tahir *bey*, in a calm voice, “I know that there are tribes that hate the Armenians, but it is possible that those tribes have their own reasons for that.”

“And so have you such reasons!” interrupted the Sheikh of Bagran, unable to control his anger.

“Yes, you also have reasons!” cried the Sheikh of Khian. “You are of the true Faith, but these slaves are infidels, they are the enemies of your holy Faith.”

These words drew forth sounds of approbation.

"You are right, your word is truth," replied Tahir *bey*, still in his calm way. "But the Armenians make no war against my Faith; they are against the Government, they would cease to remain slavish *raïas*——" And after a short pause he added thoughtfully—"If it could, the Government would make us also its *raïas*, its slaves."

He was silent. This time there was a murmur of approbation, which was speedily followed, however, by protests. The Sheikh of Khian could hardly retain his rage. Hassan *agha* shouted again and again; but with a gesture, Tahir *bey* silenced the exclamations, and cried in an angry voice—

"Are we not free? Are we not our own masters? Why, then, must we obey all kinds of orders?" And in decisive tones he declared: "I have no desire to make war on the Armenians. Let the Government do as it likes with them. My father's wish is sacred—I will keep it entirely, that oath. The rest of you are free to do what seems good to you!"

The Sheikh of Khian leapt from his place as if he had been stung. All the others followed his example. There was general confusion, all was shouting, crying, swearing and gesticulation. Many held with Tahir *bey*; but the majority were against him. Amid the general distraction, tumult, and disputing, suddenly Ismail *bey* sprang with uplifted dagger towards Hassan *agha*, who had just hurled an insult at him. But the blow was warded off by the people who interposed. The tumult and general confusion still continued, when Tahir *bey* and Ismail *bey*, with their servants, mounted and rode off on their horses.

At last, as the number of the disputants diminished, as one and another departed from both sides, the dispute gradually ceased; and when those who had lingered leaped gaily on their horses and quickly disappeared in the distance, a dull, mournful silence weighed upon the place.

Already the sky was gathering light. The clouds hanging about the crests of the mountains began to flush. At intervals, from the bottom of ruins and caverns, came the lingering, melancholy cry of the night-bird with its "a-koo," while from another direction in the distance, immediately like an echo, came the same lingering and lugubrious cry: "a-koo!" It was like two lost brothers seeking one another over wild woods and hills. From its leafy hiding-places the nightingale sighed out its last notes. Gradually the ancient forest awoke to the song of birds. The wind swept through the valley. All nature was born again, and sang and adorned itself and rejoiced.

Two months later, Sassoon was deep in flames, in blood and massacres.

On the plain of Moosh, which is like a vast rolling sea of verdure, wide and beautiful, a mass of men were marching in gloomy silence, with slow, weary steps, under a low heavy grey sky; closed in by a long chain of soldiers and *sapties*, more than a hundred Armenians were dragging their fettered feet along. They had been arrested after the massacre of Sassoon, and were being taken to the prison of Moosh. Among them was the young man, Sérobik, whose mother, the old village woman, had prayed Minas and Zhirair to take, two years before, and "make

of him a soldier for his country." And a "soldier for his country" he certainly had been and was to be, and for that very reason they were leading him to prison. He was dreaming with sad eyes: not solely because of the distress of Sassoon, nor even his own fate, but also because he had been assailed by old memories. He had remembered the beginnings of his own career when he followed Minas; when, after living as an *aspatak* with him for a year, he was sent to the province of Taron, and found himself at Sassoon, where the troubles, the combats, and the massacres broke out. The recollections of Minas troubled him visibly. Cowardly, cowardly Government, which, that same winter of 1894 had killed Minas by treachery when he had taken refuge in an Armenian village! The hero had been attacked on the road, one dark snowy night, as he left the house to go off to his mountains. And his murderer had been Sérobik's own brother Pétros. Sérobik could not help speaking to a man of about thirty-five, who, with bowed head and pensive air, marched by his side.

"Ah! what a brave man, what a hero Minas was!" he exclaimed with a sigh. "His was a tragic fate. His dream was to fall dead on the field of battle, gun in hand. But they dared not meet him face to face; they only had the courage to attack him from behind treacherously, and to split his skull open with the unexpected blow of an axe—Cowards!—Cowards!"

The other made no reply, but his face darkened. Yes, indeed, the death of Minas should have been heroic. Zhirair was happier in his end. Happier? he asked himself secretly. Yes, no doubt of it—he lived like a hero, and he bore himself like a hero

beneath the gallows. He had suffered capital punishment without a trial. How long it seemed, the time since that great loss—really only a few months—since last March! Happy? Yes, and glorious too!

“After all,” he said sadly to Sérobik at last, “the fate of Minas and Zhirair is to be envied,” and his melancholy looks sought the distance, whilst the fetters on his hands and feet rang sharply.

He was Moorad, the younger brother of Zhirair.

The clank of chains was heard on the plain of Moosh. Prisoners were marching in gloomy silence, dragging tired feet. They were being led away—to torture perhaps, or was it to be exile, or maybe the gallows?—and they kept moving forward, as they had done in the fight, always forward, towards salvation, towards martyrdom, towards liberty!

CHAPTER VIII

VASPOORAKAN

THE red dawn was reflected in the blue waters of Lake Van. Surrounded by high mountains and beautiful fields of living green, and crowned by the historical, monolithic citadel, those waters beat against their shores, their great turquoise-coloured waves all decked with foam, fine as bepearled lace. Beneath the impregnable citadel, embosomed in the rich foliage of Aigestan, lies the town of Van. For two weeks the waters of the great lake had been reddened by rills of blood : the Armenians were being massacred.

It was the 23rd of June 1896, and on that day a considerable crowd of Armenians had collected inside the convent of Varag and also beneath its walls ; for it stands not far from the town, on the slopes of the mountain, and is sheltered by it. Overhead, the mountain-chain of Varag, serenely beautiful and majestic, rose to its full height, and the crests pierced the blue heart of the warm and dazzling sky. Distracted with hunger and misery, this crowd had escaped from the town, hoping to find safety elsewhere. The sole hope of these unhappy wretches was in the

protection of the Armenian revolutionary forces, of whom more than six hundred were camping there. And the crowd was with them, trying to save their lives from the horrible disaster that lay in wait for them and galloped after them. Half-crazed by their situation, death seemed to rise up before the eyes of those unfortunates, here, there, everywhere, all over the country. Bowed beneath the pitiless blows of Fate, controlled by fatal and bloody circumstance, there they were on the mountain of Varag, fear in their hearts and woe all round them, life no longer of value to them, and death—their last consolation, their only safety. To their strained senses, the world had already turned to blood. They were oppressed by a terrible nightmare that had neither end nor issue. Let the moment go, they felt, and the end come, whatever it is to be.

A crowd of some hundreds stood round a young man with dark hair and beard and black keen eyes, who was speaking to them in a loud, clear voice.

"Comrades!" he cried indignantly, "we have been betrayed. Look! Van is hidden in the smoke of Ottoman powder. There, in the distance, our villages are in flames!"

And all eyes were turned in the direction which he pointed out, where was the smoke spreading above the city like a thick dust cloud, and, farther away, the raging fire that devastated the villages. Murmurs of indignation burst from every heart in a dull roar.

"A fortnight ago we were still in the city. For a whole week, by dint of a desperate struggle against the Ottomans, our armed forces prevented these massacres from breaking out. We were the conquerors;

that city, exclusively Armenian, was saved. But then, later, we had the unpardonable misfortune to submit to the entreaties of some representatives of foreign powers, who gave a formal promise to prevent massacres on condition that we left the city, and then, as soon as we were gone, the massacres began. Yes," he cried again, "we have been betrayed."

This time a cry of rage rose from the crowd, and a long shudder passed over it.

"Now they have been massacring us for more than a year," cried the young man, "and hundreds of thousands of Armenians have been drowned in their own blood. The rivers run blood, the earth is tired of drinking it. The weapon held by the hand of Europe is only brandished over the head of the despot and assassin, but it falls heavily upon a whole defenceless people, who only demand their rights."

And the young man continued his speech, though often interrupted by cries of indignation and vengeance from the excited crowd, whose heart beat in unison with his.

He was Martik Sarookhianantz, the schoolfellow and friend of Léon, whose death had fallen upon him like a thunderbolt. He was then in the University of St Petersburg. Being a man of convictions, he was already prepared for the revolutionary struggle. He had often said to his comrades: "It is a crime to sit here on the University benches with folded arms, and think of one's personal career, whilst our people are being murdered; and it is not merely a question of our progress and of our future, but of our very existence as a people. The duty of every Armenian, and especially of those who are educated,

is to use his courage and his brains in the people's service."

The death of his friend Léon hastened his decision to go to Turkish Armenia. His heart cried for vengeance. And in the beginning of 1895, he left London for Van, where his energy, his knowledge and his feverish activity, gave a wonderful impulse and tremendous strength to the revolutionary movement and organisation. He was at Van, when, in the summer of 1896, the insatiate enemy decided, upon some pretext or another, to inundate with blood the villages of Vaspoorakan, the great majority of whose inhabitants are Armenians.

"Ah!" his voice thrilled above the crowd, "they are going to murder us! Good, we know how to die, if it is in a holy war!"

And in one breath, cries of anger and enthusiasm rose from hundreds of hearts, and continued to rise up in a dull roar and float away to the mountain tops of Varag. And Martik spoke once more. His words were full of anger, of bitterness, of hatred, of passion, of vengeance. Ah! they wished to exterminate an ancient people; but this people was full of life for the future! They shed its blood and made it flow as the rivers had never yet flowed over the plains! And with never a single thought of justice, a single act of kindness for the sufferers, for the slain innocents! Horrible hecatombs were piled up, thousands of corpses one upon another, and the Armenians were still accused of crying, "Assassin!" of trying to throw off the bonds of a yoke which alone could produce such horrors! It was this yoke which had forced them to take the revolutionary road. It was this yoke which

had made that road an historic necessity for the Armenian people, who, being alone and without strong support, could only count on their own forces, small as they are, to work out their deliverance. If they fail by reason of the weakness of their forces, they will go proudly and serenely to martyrdom, sealing with shame the civilisation of humanity.

And Martik's voice trembled, his words were trenchant, and his heart, filled with increasing anguish, uttered its deepest cries of malediction against the fatal lot that was fallen upon his people. He shuddered, and his cheeks were hot; and his forcible, striking gestures were like sword-thrusts in the empty air.

"The Mohammedan storm is let loose on our country," he cried, "and threatens to sweep away our people; do not be feeble, but brave the storm!"

And the enthusiastic cries of the crowd rose up around him, and had barely ceased when Martik resumed his speech. But this time his voice was gentle and pensive at first; then little by little it grew louder; the words flowed abundantly and rhythmically. Then as his voice rose clearer, sometimes it sounded like a bell, and his high tones filled a larger sphere and floated away over the heads of the audience, towards the blue horizon of the lake, towards the mountain heights of Varag, towards the infinite sky, ever wide, ever lofty, like the Ideal of which he spoke with such deep inspiration.

And as hundreds of tongues uttered fresh cries of admiration, enthusiasm, and heroic abnegation, sud-

denly a sinister roar proceeded from the town of Van, and a dense smoke covered the horizon.

"The cannon! the cannon!" was the universal cry.

"Yes, the cannon!" cried Martik too. "They are bombarding the Armenian quarters! Forward!"

In the *vilayet* of Vaspoorakan for more than a week a corps of Armenian combatants had fought desperate battles, endured bloody days, and achieved heroic deeds. They fought against the Ottoman army and against masses of Kurds. They defended, and valiantly, the fugitive Armenians, who were quitting the towns and villages by thousands, and making for the Persian frontier. But the number of fighters gradually decreased. In the unequal battles, each one of them, after slaying several enemies, fell a victim in his turn to Kurdish or Ottoman bullets. Everywhere lay corpses drenched in blood. Several thousands of Armenians were put to death in one week.

On the Mount of Bazigara at Vaspoorakan, at twilight, three men, back to back, continued to shoot against hundreds of Kurds, who were hemming them in with a circle of fire: two, Terdat and Vartan, were *aspataks*, and Martik, their captain, was the third. The hopeless fight was still going on when darkness fell. A last discharge of guns rang out, and in the sudden silence that followed, a moaning echo sobbed slowly among the hills.

That autumn two climbers were mounting the slopes of Bazigara at a slow, thoughtful pace; one an old man over sixty, the other a lad. It was in the

month of August, and the sun lit up the brilliant green grass.

"Yes, my son," said the old man sadly, continuing the conversation, "and it was on this height that two months ago our brave Armenians fought their last battle. . . . There our Martik, whom all the province loved, died, and he was only twenty-five when he fell."

He bent his head in silence

"Ah," he resumed, "he was great indeed, a glowing, sensitive spirit—all his thoughts were noble. He came and he went like a dream. Like a falling star in a summer night he came, he shone, and suddenly he was gone."

"Do they know the spot where he fell?" asked the lad with throbbing heart.

"No, they don't," replied the old man sadly, after a short silence, "and they don't know what became of his body."

He stopped to wipe the sweat from his brow, and silently he looked around him.

"The spot where he fell!" he exclaimed. "But look, my lad, look round you. The beautiful meadows and valleys of Vaspoorakan recall his noble presence, the rill reflects his face; the rivers sing his glory, the mountains, tombs of heroes, echo his name, and the wind carries it hither and thither; here, at our feet, is the place where he fell!"

He walked silently ahead, with a mournful air.

"But wait," he cried, and stopped suddenly, "there is the flower of his blood!" and he pointed to a crimson flower, which waved its head gently before their sight. And in a sorrowful, trembling voice, he said—

“ Before we cross the frontier, come, my lad, come let us kneel before this flower of his blood ; perhaps he fell dead just here ! ”

And the old man and the lad, shaken with grief and awe, piously bared their heads, and sorrowfully knelt down in prayer beside the crimson flower.

CHAPTER IX

ZEITUN

IT was the autumn of 1895. For weeks Armenia and the Armenians had been smothered in a sea of fire and of blood—their own. On the 18th of October, after a series of desperate conflicts, which lasted three consecutive days, the fortress of Zeitun was taken by the insurgent Armenians of the same town. The Ottoman garrison of the fortress, more than six hundred men strong, well provisioned for war, and in possession of two large cannon, had been captured. Two flags now floated above the two extremities of the captured fortress: one tri-coloured—white, green, and red, the other plain red, the colour of blood. One was the Armenian national flag, the other that of the insurrectionists. Upon the first the words were inscribed in letters of gold, "Long live the Armenian people, long live Zeitun!" On the second, "Long live the Insurrection, and the Huntchak!"

Beneath the fortress, at the other end of the valley, the Ottoman army, sent from Marash, and several other surrounding districts, was already gathering in a great dark mass. Zeitun was in revolt.

To the north of Armenian Cilicia, where the long,

majestic chain of the Taurus thrusts winding mountain spurs away from the Cilician Mediterranean towards the north, the mountains group themselves, radiating into smaller ranges. Among the crests of these, which are covered with snow during part of the year, are upland valleys, lying very high. In one of these valleys, all surrounded with rocks and forest, is hidden the town of Zeitun, clinging to the slopes of a great mountain-amphitheatre.

The country around is of rare beauty ; on every hand are heard the roar of falling torrents and the gay music of running waters ; everywhere are seen fresh and icy springs like mirrors, vast forests clothing the breast of the mountains, huge planes, dark broad ilices, tall pines, and grassy verdure which lasts all the year round, in spite of the devouring heat of the sun.

This name, Zeitun, with its inhabitants who are open-hearted and open-eyed, is dear to all Armenians : dear, because it belongs to Armenian Cilicia, where, up to 1393, the Christian Armenian kingdom was thriving, which fell at that date under the yoke of the Seljuks. The last House of Armenian kings, that of the Rubinians, reigned in Cilicia for four centuries, establishing their throne there, after the devastation of Great Armenia by the Tartars and Persians, and while the greater part of Lesser Armenia was in the hands of the Greeks. Zeitun is therefore dear to Armenians, because of its tradition of independence, a tradition which it keeps sacredly to this day. Zeitun is dear to Armenians because, until 1862, its people were able, as much by their courage as by favour of their mountain site, to keep themselves in a state of semi-independence.

Having their native princes yet among them, the people of their own free will generally entrusted executive power to them, assisted by the elders of the city, who were men well known to the whole country ; but the laws were always made and proclaimed by the people themselves in a general assembly. Zeitun is dear to Armenians, because in this semi-independence, it held aloft (and after all, it does so to this day) the national flag of the Armenians. All through the present century it has victoriously resisted the attempts of the Ottoman Government upon this semi-independence, surviving as by a miracle, an oasis in the desert of the empire, which is rendered as barren by barbarous and tyrannous laws as Sahara by its sand. These attempts had no success up to 1872.

At this date the men of Zeitun were driven to insurrection, and after a month's successful defence had the misfortune to believe the fair words of the foxes of the Government, and fell into the snare cunningly set for them. And this time they were forced to recognise their own defeat, and to see for the first time Turkish officials set foot and remain in their beloved city. But this humiliation was not all. The Government saddled the town of Zeitun, which has nearly eighteen thousand inhabitants exclusively Armenian, with a fortress. This fortress is set at the only entrance, just opposite the town, on which for eighteen years the black mouths of its cannon have been turned, gaping and fierce, ready at a moment's notice to destroy the city and all its inhabitants should they grow so bold as to think of a new rising or even of resistance. The

events during the five or six months of the last insurrection in and around Zeitun have shown conspicuously and startlingly how not even this fortress can avail against a people which decides to defend itself, even to the end.

Thus it was that insurrection broke out in the first week of October in Zeitun. It was caused by the massacres. The insurrection of Zeitun meant resistance to the murder of a whole nation. It was a cry for liberty forced from a defenceless people who were being sacrificed. It was a cry of vengeance, of indignation, of distress. And this appeal for deliverance floated out over the whole country, over the entire nation, and there were in it the accents of grief, of self-sacrifice, of heroism, and of faith.

The terrific series of massacres began on the shores of the blue waters of the Black Sea. When Trebizond was laid waste it was Armenian blood that was shed; and corpses were strewn over the length and breadth of Armenia, till the massacre reached the proud Cilician mountains, and stained the very shores of the Mediterranean Sea. Nero's crimes pale beside those bacchanalia of bloodshed. A new monster had arisen, a man-eating monster, mad with the thirst for blood, drunk with the crimes that ruin worlds, rolling ensanguined eyes, possessed by the ferocity of homicide. And the Christian world, trembling at the savage show, yet applauded the Ottoman bull, whose ring was a whole country, while, mad with pride, he ran his deadly course, shaking the ground beneath his thundering hoofs, and scattering death around him with terrible force. The bloody spectacle

was not over till thousands of corpses lay dead, among them many naked bodies of young girls, dead and dishonoured, beside the bodies of murdered little ones "untimely ripped" from the dead mothers on whose breasts they lay.

The vampire was insatiable. He must have blood. It was a necessity of his existence. But the necessity for the Armenians' existence was quite another thing. And the Cilician mountains groaned in echo to the insurgents' cries

In the beginning of the second week of October 1895, the fight had already begun at Zeitun, bitter, bold, decisive. Firing never ceased for a moment. Zeitun was beset by more than ten thousand men of the regular Ottoman troops and of *bashi-bazouks*. On this conflict hung the fate of Zeitun. The blood of the Zeituniotes was on fire. The remembrance of the horrible martyrdoms of thousands and thousands of Armenians made every warrior tremble with rage. Before them and around them moved the mass of murderers. In the face of this terrible danger the Zeituniotes assumed the offensive, and detached bands on all sides to besiege the fortress, from which at intervals the cannon roared upon them. This struggle, as well as the incessant close fire of small arms on both sides, lasted more than fifty hours, after which the men of Zeitun at last succeeded in driving back the besieging Mohammedans, and in forcing the garrison in the fort, which numbered six hundred, to surrender. The national flag of the Armenians and the revolutionary flag floated out on the top of the fortress; and the town's-folk for days after this memorable victory held high festival,

This was the beginning of the insurrection of Zeitun, and it lasted till the middle of the following January. It was one long series of victories for the people of Zeitun, until the Ottoman tyrant made peace with them through the mediation of the European powers. The insurrection of Zeitun saved the honour of the Armenian nation.

A mountain road climbs upwards to the town of Zeitun, and forms one of Nature's most wonderful pictures ; there, in the rosy dawn, one day before the insurrection had broken out, three men might have been seen, mounted on horseback. The fine creatures went briskly, as if they felt how fast their riders' hearts were beating, eager to arrive, and as eagerly awaited. The one who rode in the middle was a young man with an open expression on his proud countenance. His two comrades, Avak *agha*, and Avetis *agha*, were amongst the bravest of the brave men of Zeitun, and both notables. A few weeks later they both fell, fighting courageously when the insurrection was at its height.

They had a grand reception at the hands of the principal persons of Zeitun. There was general rejoicing over the young man's arrival, and he was deeply touched with the cordial reception. It was with feelings akin to veneration that he trod the dust of Zeitun, sacred to glory and the brave. His name was Maral ; he was the emissary from the revolutionary party, who led the armed forces of the Armenians, and fought steadily throughout the whole insurrection.

That evening a meeting took place of all the native

princes and persons of note in Zeitun. It was held in the house of one of the princes with whom Maral was staying. It lasted all night. They took counsel together, they discussed the terrible situation of their country, created by the massacres; also the provocations given by the Government to the people of Zeitun, in order to have an ostensible excuse to massacre them; and finally the line of conduct to be taken by Zeitun, and the resolutions to be adopted. To every one present an imminent insurrection seemed the one issue, the sole means of defending themselves and the national honour.

"We do not want insurrection for its own sake," said Maral, in explanation of the views of the Party, whose representative he was. "We require it because we are driven to it, because it is the only way of vengeance. It is self-defence, it is deliverance. Neither do we want revolution for its own sake. We want it because we feel it an imminent and absolute necessity to raise the entire political and economical situation of our country, and to create laws and social forms which shall accord with the natural hopes and the emancipation of our people. Had there been a grain of hope that the European Powers would take any real steps towards our autonomy, it would have been criminal in us to urge our people into bloody struggles. But they have always played us false. And what is, if possible, more monstrous is, that they have basely misrepresented us, the reforming and patriotic party, by distorting the character and aspirations of our movement."

And as Maral continued in a voice of resentment: "We love our nation; we want her, to

have a respite, a breathing-space. When European diplomacy proffered mediâtion, the revolutionary party risked its influence by setting its face against any insurrectionary movement. And we may claim for it the credit of being successful. The terrible year which followed the Sassoon massacre, that year of untold anxiety, of unheard-of sufferings, and provocation, was endured by the Armenian people with heroic calmness and self-control. We should have hailed any real concession as inaugurating a new era, a prospect of peaceful development for our people. But we have nothing to wait for any more. Since perish we must, let us perish like men, fighting our enemy face to face, not, like cowards, turning our backs on them."

"There is no other way, my children, no other way," said an old man in pensive tones; his long moustache was as white as snow—"these are true sayings, and, besides, it is our right!" he added vehemently.

All were unanimous and all eyes shone.

"When I was younger, in 1872," resumed the veteran, knitting the thick brows that were as white as his moustache, "things were not as bad as they are now, and yet we made the same choice then; we rose as one man." In those days the Pasha sent us a delegate who counselled submission. But there, 'twas only words, as it always is," old Vartan went on scornfully. "We are as much pashas as they, and of more ancient origin. For, after all, these Turkish pashas are mere brigands, Circassians who have been advanced to favour because they have made a gift of their sisters and daughters to the

pashas at Stamboul. But we, we are pashas by reason of the valour of our ancestors, or our own valour for that matter. There is no other way, my children, no other way!" he concluded in grave tones.

"Of course there is no other way!" exclaimed a man of about fifty years of age, tall and broad-shouldered, with a haughty and deliberate carriage. "And whatever the Government may do, as long as we are alive, we shall not permit them to share our beautiful Zeitun with the Circassians. My hands are defiled already with the blood of more than fifteen of their most famous Circassian fighters, and I will slay as many more if it is necessary for the defence of our Zeitun."

"And of all Cilicia!" added another, a handsome, slender young fellow, starting up from his seat.

"I call God to witness that I will do as much for all the Armenians, whose blood is our own!" exclaimed the tall man again, as he stood in the midst of the assembly and swayed it. "I swear to you that with my wrinkled face, and, in spite of it, I await the day of battle as impatiently as a boy—as my own son."

This declaration expressed the feeling of all. An extraordinary scene of exultation ensued; every one spoke at once. There was laughter and gesticulations and shouts. But all at once a discordant note was heard amidst the general and joyful outbreak.

"But all this is utterly useless."

"What? Useless? What is useless?" asked every one of a man of forty, who seemed to shun their looks.

"Why, yea, it is useless to rise," he said coldly,

though with some confusion. "We can do nothing against these tens of thousands of the Ottoman army, whilst they, once victorious, will waste and ruin our Zeitun, our gardens and our goods. Far better to lie quiet, and give them no chance to get in."

An answering clamour rose on every side; but each phrase was broken by fierce and angry denials, by disdainful exclamations, even by laughter, amid the cries of indignation.

"But that's an old story!" cried one.

"The man's a coward!" sneered another.

"The Ottoman army shall never conquer the men of Zeitun."

"It's all very well, but if we don't take up arms, we may as well dig our graves."

Amid the general clamour the veteran interposed.

"Don't disturb yourselves, my children," he said gravely. "If there is one among the chiefs of Zeitun who disagrees with us all, and does not care to take part in the insurrection, he has only to shut himself up in his house till the insurrection is at an end. For such a man," he added solemnly, "is no longer a Zeituniote."

These words had the effect of a verdict. The applause was loud and long. The former speaker protested, they heard him with more tolerance, but the verdict was unchanged.

Old Vartan got up, and in the midst of a general silence spoke gravely—

"We are driven against the wall, and have very little choice. We may submit with the apathy of dumb creatures to our fate, awaiting the day when the Turks, having finished their revenge, and grown

sick of murdering, shall permit the cowed remnant of our race to drag on their base life of hopeless slavery ; or we may curse the day when we believed in the dream of freedom, and in the possibility of being men and citizens. If we do neither of these things then we must take our fate into our own hands. The last desperate way left to us is open rebellion. We know full well what this means for us in Turkey. But we have so little to lose. And we know from history that people who have been bold enough to risk their all have often won their cause, in spite of overwhelming odds."

After this speech the whole assembly broke out again into enthusiasm. One would have thought that these hardy mountaineers already heard the clash of arms, and smelt the familiar powder, and beheld the fascinating rush of battle. With what hot impulse, with what joyous rage, they fling themselves upon the battlefield, leaping and climbing like deer over the stones and mountain slopes ; or sheltered behind the rocks from whence they speed the whistling, implacable balls. Sometimes standing, sometimes crawling, but always with the same agile, light, and frolic movements, they utter shouts of victory, a scattered host, surrounding their enemy on every side, tormenting, and irritating, and fatiguing him, and ending in a sudden onslaught, all the while uttering wild cries, and giving chase like hunters after the wild beasts that haunt the villages. Every Zeituniote cherishes in his heart this poetic passion for the fight, a poetry that is hearty and full of jests, and yet rude and bloody too.

The night was deep and the sky black. Towards evening there had been a desperate fight, which had lasted more than four hours, and ended in victory for the men of Zeitun. And now the main body of the insurrectionist army was resting. The halting-place, where the men were dispersed in groups, was a naked, rocky mountain-side. Beneath, gulfed in obscurity, lay the deep and narrow valley, whose other side was a steep hill. Hundreds of the enemy lay dead in this valley.

The night was deep and the sky dark. Silence reigned all round, mournful and dumb. Here and there black shadows moved like ghosts. They were the sentinels. In the darkness, another human figure could just be distinguished, seated on a stone. It was old Vartan. After the fatigues of the battle, which he had led, he too was sentinel. Sleep fled from him; he was invaded by melancholy thoughts. He seemed to see his country stretched before him, glorious in her misfortunes, the martyr of ages, this country which was a heritage to them from the olden times, times of glory, seemingly for ever dead. At present this country was shrouded in the thick pall of night, as by a huge winding-sheet; the silence of death reigned over her; she seemed lifeless. And to-morrow? . . . To-morrow would flush rose-red with the dawn, dark flocks of crows, with joyful croaking, would descend, like a cloud covering the sky, and fasten upon the heaps of beloved dead. The long-suffering earth would once more uncover her maternal breast to embrace and hold for ever the sacred dust of her massacred sons, and would drink, as a pledge for the future, the blood that had flowed from their veins.

Thousands of women, men and children, mothers and sisters, fathers and brothers, orphans and beloved, despairing, with white faces and tearful eyes, must bow their heads, like weeping willows, and bend their backs, and fall down on trembling knees on hundreds and hundreds of spots, by the tombs of the unknown, by the stones and hillocks, by the trees and springs, in the cottages and houses and churches, in every place, in all the places where the blood of their loved ones had been spilt, where their bodies had been scattered, and for ever lost. . . . But then also these deep sufferings must bring with them, day by day, wrath and indignation, and the indomitable hope of a breath of new life and ever-new aspiration after deliverance, and a clamour of protest and the spirit of revolt. And such thoughts would hover day and night above the stifling atmosphere of the country, whose teeming womb is being rent by the birth of a new era, that a new edifice may rise up on these glorious ruins, lit up by the rays of a new dawn in the ardent Orient heavens.

At this moment the dawn began to tremble forth shimmering and pale. And suddenly the dreamer was surprised by the bold flight of an eagle that clove the skies towards the mountain heights, and hovered there. Surely it was the eagle emblem of Armenia, that, as it hovers, sheds hot tears over the desert ruins and on the silent dead. And in those tears, the dawn is shining with immortal hope for the happiness that is to come.

LIST OF FOREIGN WORDS

Agha—Title of respect.

Araktschi—Sort of cap, sewn in different colours.

Asfatak—A revolutionary soldier, guerilla.

Bashlig—Caucasian or Laze cowl, a sort of hood, with two long wings.

Bim-bashi—Colonel.

Efendi—Title of respect, sir.

Feraché—A long narrow mantle.

Fassatys—Revolutionaries, rebels.

Fessad-bashi—Chief of the Revolutionaries.

Giaour—Infidel.

Gsir—Chief or head of the village.

Hanoom—Madame.

Idaré—Mutessarif's executive council.

Jenneth—Paradise.

Jérid—Sport of reed-play on horse-back.

Jinn—Evil spirit or demon.

Jhesvé—Small copper casserole for making coffee.

Kaimakam—Sub-governor, military or civil.

Kiatib—Secretary.

Kémanché—A musical instrument somewhat resembling a mandoline.

Khan—Inn.

Kurush—Turkish coin—twopence.

Laze—A Mohammedan mountain tribe.

Livre, Turkish—A Turkish gold piece, of the nominal value of twenty-three francs.

Mangal—A kind of chafing-dish.

Mastik—Spirit resembling whisky.

Méjidé—A silver coin worth four and a half francs.

Merkez—A station or resting-place on the highways.

Minaret—The tower of a mosque, from the top of which, among the Turks, the call to prayers is sounded.

Mudir—An official of somewhat high rank who administers the communes.

Muezzin—A functionary whose chief duty is to call at the hours of prayer for the Mussulmans from the top of the minarets.

Mulazim—Lieutenant.

Mutessarif—Governor.

Narguile—A long pipe for smoking, fixed to a vessel full of water in which the smoke is cleansed.

Osmanlis—Ottomans.

Onbashi—Sergeant.

Padishah—The Sultan.

Para—The smallest Turkish coin.

Patriarchate—The office of the Armenian Patriarch.

Rasa—Subject-race.

Sanjak—Department (administrative).

Shashlik—Meat grilled on hot coals.

Sheikh—Ecclesiastical chief of the Mussulmans.

Tatar—Turkish postal official.

Tchalma—Turban.

Tchavoosh—Sergeant of police.

Tezkert—Internal passports, used throughout the Turkish Empire.

Vali—Governor General.

Vilayet—Province.

Yapoonji—A sort of mantle covered with goat-skin.

Zaptié—Armed policeman or gendarme.

Zipka—A short waistcoat of peculiar cut.

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